

CRITICISM

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EDWARD DOUGHTIE*

Sibling Rivalry: Music vs. Poetry in Campion and Others

Thomas Campion's rare if not exactly unique position as an English poet who set his own verse to his own music has generated a fair amount of critical comment.¹ Much of this comment has tried to embrace both aspects of Campion's work, and it includes several subtle and illuminating analyses of how words and music interact in individual songs.² Yet there is some division, as might be expected in our specialized age. Those critics whose orientation is mainly musical have established a firm tradition of evaluating Campion's position as a maker of airs or lute-songs in relation to his contemporaries. From Warlock in 1926 to Spink in 1974,³ Campion is seen as at best a charming melodist, at worst a composer of dull "four-square" tunes; he is ranked far below Dowland, below Danyel, Morley, and Rosseter, and finds serious competition in Robert Jones and Thomas Ford. The musical critics are attentive to the verse, but are mainly concerned with how the music treats it. Although a few literary critics ignore Campion's music,⁴ others consider its

* An Associate Professor of English at Rice University, Edward Doughtie has edited *Lyrics from English Airs*, 1596-1622.

¹ Another poet-composer was Thomas Whythorne, whose *Autobiography* has been edited by James Osborne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

² See Miles M. Kastendieck, *England's Musical Poet, Thomas Campion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938; repr. Russell & Russell, 1963); Wilfrid Mellers, *Harmonious Meeting* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1965), pp. 70-80; Walter R. Davis, "Melodic and Poetic Structure: The Examples of Campion and Dowland," *Criticism*, 4 (1962), 89-107, and Davis' Introduction to his edition of Campion's *Works* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967); and Edward Lowbury, Timothy Salter, and Alison Young, *Thomas Campion, Poet, Composer, Physician* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970).

³ "Peter Warlock" (Philip Heseltine), *The English Ayre* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), pp. 105-106; Bruce Pattison, *Music and Poetry of the English Renaissance* (London: Methuen, 1948; 2nd edition, 1970), pp. 128-136; Ian Spink, *English Song: Dowland to Purcell* (London: Batsford, 1974), pp. 24-29.

⁴ R. W. Short, "The Metrical Theory and Practice of Thomas Campion," *PMLA*, 59 (1944), 1003-1018, and C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the*

effect on his poetic forms and meters, and analyze its imitative and expressive effects.⁵ But they rarely consider the music in its historical context or step back and consider the song as an integrated whole.

In what follows, I do not pretend to overturn previous judgments or to break new ground, but I hope to offer some bridges between the musical and literary critics, refine some generalizations, and offer at least one new perspective. That perspective comes from the realization that seven of Campion's poems were set to music by other contemporary composers, and that all but one of these settings were published before Campion's own. Thus some of Campion's settings may be seen as corrections of previous treatments of his poems. Just as each performance of *Hamlet* varies with different actors, readings of poems vary with different readers. A musical setting, however, can suggest limits to such readings, and the poet's own setting must be seriously considered. However, if one song seems more satisfying to us than another, we may find that some of the differences may be traced to Campion's theories about song as well as to his greater or lesser ability as a composer.

Since Campion's own statements about the art of song should be seen in context, a brief reminder of some of the historical and critical commonplaces about Elizabethan and Jacobean song may be useful at this point.⁶ Some aspects of humanism and the Reformation seem to have given rise to a general concern about the relationship between words and music. The reformers wanted the sacred words of psalms and hymns to be heard and understood, not obscured by polyphony. The humanists wanted song to produce the ethical effects attributed to ancient Greek music (although little Greek music was known and less was understood). The results of these

Sixteenth Century (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1954), pp. 551-557. John T. Irwin is not ignorant of the music, but focuses on the poetry in "Thomas Campion and the Musical Emblem," *SEL*, 10 (1970), 121-141.

⁵Davis, Introduction; Catherine Ing, *Elizabethan Lyrics* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1951), pp. 107-177; Hallett Smith, *Elizabethan Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 279-287; and John Hollander, *Vision and Resonance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 71-90.

⁶This survey is by necessity over-simplified. For fuller accounts, see Pattison; Gustave Reese, *Music in the Renaissance* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2nd edition, 1959); John Stevens, *Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court* (London: Methuen, 1961); and the introduction to my edition of *Lyrics from English Airs, 1596-1622* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970).

concerns impinged on the air, the form used by Campion and others, in a variety of ways. One of the immediate ancestors of the air was the "consort song," which has a fairly simple solo line supported by a consort of viols providing a richly polyphonic accompaniment. The solo parts were rather like some of the Protestant psalm-tunes—indeed, the texts of several of William Byrd's consort songs were metrical psalms (*Psalms, Sonets, & Songs of Sadness and Pietie*, 1588).⁷ Three of the religious songs in Campion's *Two Bookes of Ayres* (c. 1613) are paraphrases of psalms, and although the verse is in the sophisticated Sidney tradition, the tunes of these and other songs in this book are not so far removed from the old Sternhold and Hopkins psalms.

Humanistic interest in expressing the sense of the words through musical means affected the Italian madrigal composers, and they in turn influenced the way in which the composers of airs and of the later consort songs treated words. Thomas Morley's famous advice reflects the basic attitude which some madrigalists carried to extremes: "You must have a care that when your matter signifieth ascending, high heaven, and such like, you make your musicke ascend: and by the contrarie where your dittie speaketh of descending lowenes, depth, hell, and others such, you must make your musicke descend."⁸ That is, not only should music express the emotions of the words—"if you have a grave matter, applie a grave kinde of musicke to it" and vice versa—but it should *illustrate* the words as well. In the later sixteenth century, members of the Italian *Camerata* were in the process of de-emphasizing the illustrative and polyphonic styles of the madrigal for the declamatory and dramatic solo forms which would lead to opera; these movements would affect English songwriters as well, even Campion.⁹

But earlier and more basic foreign influences, perhaps more pervasive though less easily characterized, were the less expressive, less illustrative, less polyphonic, more homophonic French airs and part-songs. Campion's songs on the whole grow from this part of their ancestry. A more specific, if limited, influence on Campion may have been the works of a group of French humanists. The

⁷ One of several recordings of consort songs is Alfred Deller's "William Byrd and his Age" (Vanguard-Bach Guild 557); see also Philip Brett, ed., *Consort Songs, Musica Britannica XXII* (London: Stainer & Bell, 1967).

⁸ *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (1597), sig. Aa2v.

⁹ David Greer, "Campion the Musician," *Lute Society Journal*, 9 (1967), 14.

Académie de Musique et Poésie, under the leadership of Jean-Antoine de Baïf, produced a number of songs with texts in classical quantitative meters set to music consisting of two note values to match the long and short syllables. Sidney and Spenser (among others) had experimented with quantitative meters in English, and Campion's *Observations in the Art of English Poesie* (1602) is well known as the last serious theoretical attempt to justify such experiments. Campion also wrote one song in Sapphic verse set to music in the manner of the French Académie, "Come let us sound."¹⁰ It was not very successful, and the experiment was not repeated. But it indicates that Campion shared some of the humanistic concerns about the relationship between words and music.

The contradictions between Campion's theoretical attack on rhymed verse in the *Observations* and his practice of using rhyme in most of his English verse is well known. There also seems to be a contradiction between Campion's practice and the address to the reader of *A Booke of Ayres* published in 1601 by Campion and Philip Rosseter. There he mocks those who

will admit no Musicke but that which is long, intricate, bated with fuge, chaine with sincopation, and where the nature of everie word is precisely exprest in the Note, like the old exploded action in Comedies, when if they did pronounce *Memini*, they would point to the hinder part of their heads, if *Video*, put their finger in their eye. But such childish observing of words is altogether ridiculous, and we ought to maintaine as well in Notes, as in action a manly cariage, gracing no word, but that which is eminent, and emphaticall.¹¹

Although Campion avoids the contrapuntal style of the consort song and airs such as Dowland's "Sorrow stay," songs baited with fugue and chained with syncopation, the presence in the volume of songs containing illustrative devices (e.g. "When to her lute Corrina sings") suggests some inconsistency. However, total consistency is not to be found in any artist, and I think that Campion's theoretical statements point to principles developing in his practice. He is

¹⁰ *Works*, ed. Davis, p. 48. William Byrd had published a similar experiment in 1588 in his *Psalmes, Sonets & Songs of Sadnes and Pietie*, No. XXIII. On these experiments, see Derek Attridge, *Well-Weighted Syllables* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

¹¹ *Works*, ed. Davis, p. 15.

concerned that verse should not rely on rhyme for its integrity and that an accentual system of verse should not ignore the subtle effects that can be produced by attention to the quantity of syllables.¹² He is also concerned that illustrative devices, counterpoint, and other sources of largely musical interest should not detract from the verse, or from the total effect of the song.

In the same preface to Rosseter's book, and again in his *Two Bookes of Ayres* (c. 1613), Campion compares the air to the epigram: both should be "short and well seasoned." To make an air with the same economy of means, wit, and forcefulness as an epigram is a challenge: "A naked Ayre without guide, or prop, or colour but his owne, is easily censured of everie eare, and requires so much the more invention to make it please." Campion's airs are not totally naked, that is, not just simple melodies; but he will not "clogg a light song with a long Praeludium," and he will use restraint to keep music from obscuring the words. In the preface to his *Two Bookes of Ayres* (c. 1613), Campion sums up his concern for balance by saying, "I have chiefly aymed to couple my Words and Notes lovingly together, which will be much for him to doe that hath not power over both."¹³

In the preface to his last book, Campion notes that "Some words are in these Bookes which have beene cloathed in Musicke by others, and I am content they then served their turne: yet give mee now leave to make use of mine owne."¹⁴ It is to these songs I should now like to turn, and examine them in the light of some of the considerations I have raised.

For ease in reference, I list the songs from their first appearance:

"Blame not my cheeks," Rosseter and Campion, *A Book of Ayres* (1601) Part I, XIV, and Robert Jones, *Ultimum Vale* (1605), IX.

"I must complaine," John Dowland, *The Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires* (1603), XVII, and Campion's *Fourth Book of Ayres* (c. 1617), XVII.

"There is a Garden in her face," Robert Jones, *Ultimum Vale* (1605), X, and Campion's *Fourth Booke* (c. 1617), VII.

"Now let her change," Robert Jones, *Ultimum Vale* (1605), XVII; Francis Pilkington, *First Book of Songs or Ayres*

¹² Cf. Ing, p. 57, and Hallett Smith, pp. 281-283.

¹³ *Works*, ed. Davis, p. 55.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

(1605), VIII; and Campion's *Third Booke* (c. 1617), II. "Though your strangeness frets my heart," Robert Jones, *A Muscull Dreame* (1609), I, and Campion's *Second Booke* (c. 1613), XVI.

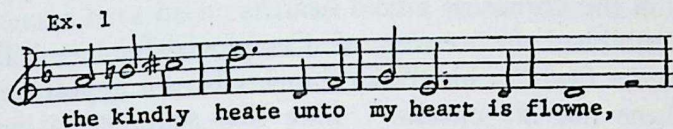
"Young and simple though I am," Alfonso Ferrabosco, *Ayres* (1609), VIII, and Campion's *Fourth Booke* (c. 1617), IX.

"Think'st thou to seduce me then," William Corkine, *Ayres* (1610), XI, and Campion's *Fourth Booke* (c. 1617), XVIII.¹⁵

"Blame not my cheeks" is the only one of all these songs first published in Campion's own setting. Although we therefore cannot see it as a "correction" of Jones's treatment of the poem, it is characteristic of his approach, as is Jones's. The poem consists of two parallel but contrasting stanzas: in the first, the love ascribes his paleness to the need of his "distressed" heart for "kindly heate"; in the second, he contrasts those whose warmth is in their cheeks and "outward parts" but in whose breasts "Poore Cupid sits and blowes his nailes for cold." The poem is artfully constructed to the advantage of almost any composer giving it a strophic setting. Both Campion and Jones not only repeat the music to the first stanza for the second, but also repeat the music to the first two lines of each stanza for the second two lines. The contrast in the poem between external appearance and internal reality is enhanced by almost line-for-line parallels between the two stanzas, for the ruddy but unfeeling suitor is described to the same music as the pale but sincere lover. Hallett Smith, in discussing the irony produced by the musical correspondence of the phrase "For their fat love" with "the kindly heate" "who art so cruel," and "Nurse not one spark,"

¹⁵ Modern editions of the music for these songs may be found in *The English Lute Songs*, ed. E. H. Fellowes, revised by Thurston Dart (London: Stainer & Bell; Series I: 17 vols. 1920-1959; Series II: 20 vols. 1925-1968). Texts may be found in Davis and in my *Lyrics from English Aires*. Davis gives music for all of the Campion songs under discussion except "Young and simple" and "Think'st thou to seduce me then" (this last is in *An Elizabethan Song Book*, ed. Noah Greenberg, W. H. Auden, and Chester Kallman, Doubleday Anchor, 1955, now repr. by Norton). I quote from the music and words of the original song-books, sometimes with corrections from the modern editions, and with lute tablature in modern notation. I modernize *u*, *v* and *s*.

notes that "It might be said that the first occurrence of the musical passage (ex. 1) produced an effect of wistfulness, but when it is



repeated and insisted upon, the feeling becomes inevitably bitter" (p. 284). Champion's music is plain and straightforward, in triple time, in a minor tonality, with chordal lute accompaniment (with a little more internal motion on the last line of each stanza). It is not so much the point that, as another critic says, "The melancholy tune fits the words well but does not illuminate them with any brilliant musical equivalents of poetic image or description";¹⁶ rather, the music *allows* the melancholy of the first stanza to turn into the irony and bitterness of the second. The economy of the epigram is at work both in the words and in the music.

To note a few other details of Champion's setting, the phrase "though pale with love" in the first line seems rushed, but other words sung to these notes (three quarters and a whole in 3/2) fit easily. One is reminded of Champion's complaint that English monosyllables and "Syllables combined" are "so loaded with Consonants, as that they will hardly keepe company with swift notes, or give the Vowell convenient liberty."¹⁷ Champion's music gives some emphasis, through pitch or length, to "cheeks," "love," "heate," "cruell." and "Quite" in the first stanza; the longer note given "by" in line 5 is justified by the presence of "love" in that position in the second stanza.

Robert Jones's setting of this poem, like his other songs with words by Champion, reflects a greater interest in the musical side of the relationship. Jones's version, like many airs, is printed so that it may be sung by four voices as well as by one voice with lute (and optional viol). Perhaps because of this alternative, there are more repeated sequences and anticipations in the accompaniment of phrases in the solo. The music is in duple time, and a major mode, and in general gives emphasis to important words. The most striking feature of the song is the long (over seven beats), high note in the last phrase on "forsakes," which becomes illustrative on "blows" in the second stanza. This is very effective musically, and gratifying for the

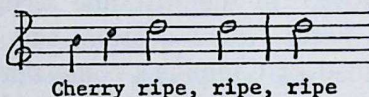
¹⁶ Lowbury, Salter, and Young, p. 70.

¹⁷ Davis, *Works*, p. 56.

singer, but it distorts the meaning of the poem—it is more appropriate for puffing Aeolus in the corner of a map than for Cupid warming his hands in the corner of a cold heart.

Jones published his setting of Campion's famous "There is a Garden in her face" in his 1605 volume, where it appears immediately after "Blame not my cheeks." Like that song, it has an alternate part-song version. Campion's setting, published later in his *Fourth Book*, is for solo voice with lute and bass viol accompaniment. Both settings are very attractive, and both convey the general mood of cheerful compliment. But in neither does the music suggest the richer significance of the imagery of the earthly paradise which John Hollander (p. 78) has discovered in the poem. Again Jones stresses musical interest. The accompanying lute (or voice) part is full of imitative sequences and there is a delightful change from duple to triple meter on the fifth line. Both composers play with the tune of the street-cry "cherry-ripe" (ex. 2). Jones repeats it six times

Ex. 2

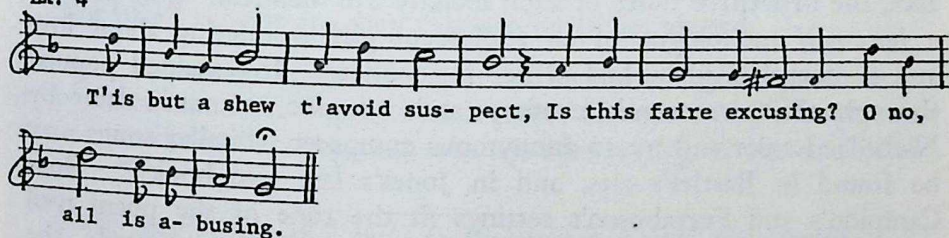


what by the enjambment in the third stanza ("Threatening with piercing frownes to kill/All that attempt...") because pauses in previous stanzas have been reflected in the music. In the solo version of Jones this gap is especially noticeable; in the part-song version, however, the lower parts pick up "all" immediately after the solo finishes "kill."

Two of Jones's settings—"Though your strangenesse" and "Now let her change"—are for two treble voices with lute. Having two voices rather than one immediately throws the balance of interest toward the music instead of the verse. "Though your strangeness" is the complaint of a lover who has been strung along by a lady whose attentions to others she defends as stratagems to keep their affair secret. The lover, in effect, says "What affair?" "Would my Rival then I were,/Some els your secret friend." Each stanza ends with the refrain, "Is this faire excusing? O no, all is abusing." Not only does Jones diffuse the dramatic force of the complaint by using two voices, he also indulges in sequential repetitions of the phrase "O no" until it (like "cherry-ripe") becomes detached from its sense in the context of the poem.

Although Jones's setting is an attractive song (as can be heard in the recorded performance by members of the Pro Musica),¹⁸ Campion's is more effective as a presentation of the poem. The first four lines are set to a repeated phrase that except for the cadence is in quarter notes; it captures the driving, bitter insistence of the lover. In the second half of the tune, the quarter notes give way to half notes on significant words, giving them a sarcastic emphasis that is as effective in the subsequent stanzas as the first. In the refrain, "fair" is emphasized with a half note, and "all" with a half note that is also on the tune's highest pitch (ex. 4).

Ex. 4



Jones's setting of "Now let her change," also with two voices, does less violence to the sense of the text than his other two-voice

¹⁸ "An Evening of Elizabethan Verse and its Music" (with W. H. Auden), Columbia ML 5051, reissued on Odyssey.

setting. In fact, it does a fair job of expressing the shift in the poem from indignation at the fickleness of the lover's mistress to sorrow that he has lost her. Jones is especially effective on the phrase "But she is gone." But to my taste, a much better setting of this poem is Francis Pilkington's, published the same year as Jones's. It is almost as effective in its part-song version as in the accompanied solo version. It begins with a fine, defiant opening phrase, then shifts to a regretful lingering on "love" ("care" and "now" in subsequent stanzas) that anticipates the poignant setting of "But she is gone" and its corresponding phrases. Pilkington repeats "But she is gone" three times in a descending sequence, but in this instance the repetition seems to enhance the feeling instead of distract from the meaning of the poem.

Campion's own setting has its effective moments. As one critic has pointed out, there is a false relation in the accompaniment of the third bar: "At this point in each verse the weird feeling produced by the C-major-minor clash and the consecutive fifths in the bass subtly interpret the meaning of the words: 'she proves strange,' 'vexe her with unkindness,' 'Once false proves faithful never.'"¹⁹ Campion also manages to build to a mild climax in the last line, although it seems more effective in the second and third stanzas when the high point is on "False" and "Faith," than in the first, when it is only on "And." It would be difficult to argue that Campion's "correction" of Pilkington is much of an improvement, for the curbs on repetition and musical interest seem to produce an inelasticity that narrows the range of emotional expressiveness. Nevertheless, Campion's setting is consistent with his view of the air as epigram.

There is not much to choose between the settings by Campion and Alfonso Ferrabosco of "Young and simple though I am." In fact, the first three notes of each melody are identical. The poem is a *faux-naïf* monologue of an adolescent girl wondering about love and contemplating the loss of her maidenhead. It remained popular through the seventeenth century and was set to music later by Nicholas Lanier and by an anonymous composer. Similar songs may be found in Bartlet's airs, and in Jones's last two books.²⁰ Both Campion's and Ferrabosco's settings fit the tone of the poem well enough. Two spots in Ferrabosco's setting seem awkward: the third phrase ends abruptly with a quarter-note on the rhyme word,

¹⁹ Lowbury, Salter, and Young, p. 154.

²⁰ See *Lyrics from English Airs*, p. 565.

and the next begins with a half-note. This would be suitable for enjambed lines, but only in the third stanza is there any suggestion of enjambment at this point. In the last phrase Ferrabosco demands a repetition of the first three syllables. This repetition is plausible for "But the flames," "Venus grant," and "Love he must," but seems clumsy for "when their new" and "Growe lesse sweet." Campion's setting has fewer problems. Yet Campion's habit of repeating a rhythmical pattern gets him into one awkward spot. In this setting the pattern is two eighth notes followed by a half or quarter note at the beginning of a phrase. The first three phrases work, but in the fifth phrase he makes the singer swallow the significant word "Smoake" (1. 5).

So far we have seen that Campion's songs "correct" the earlier settings by reining in the music when it threatens to distort the sense of the poem, and by paying more attention to musical pauses and emphases that affect the syntax or the tone of the poem. The final two songs illustrate, in comparison to their earlier settings, a bold and at least partly successful new departure, and a tired, unimaginative effort that is not saved by occasional melodic grace.

The first of these, "Think'st thou to seduce me then," involves a change in text as well as different music. William Corkine's version has three stanzas, the first two of which are close to Campion's later text, the third entirely different. It is likely, however, that Corkine's text (like those set by other composers) is a genuine early version of Campion's poem. Campion may have dropped this third stanza and substituted the two that appear with his setting because the old stanza was sententious and abstract, though witty:

If with wit we be deceived, our fals may be excused,
Seeming good with flatterie grac't, is but of a few refused.
But of all accurst are they that are by fooles abused.

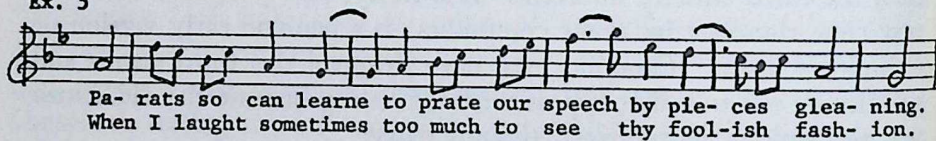
The new stanzas are more concrete, and enhance the dramatic sense of the character of the singer, who is rather like some of Shakespeare's comic heroines in her laughing, wordly-wise teasing of her unskillful wooer:

Ruth forgive me if I err'd from humane hearts compassion,
When I laught sometimes too much to see thy foolish fashion:
But alas, who lesse could doe that found so good occasion?

This dramatic presentation of the persona may account for some of the differences between Campion's and Corkine's musical treatments.

Corkine's song is pleasant, but ordinary—it is rather like some of Campion's other tunes. Like Campion, Corkine is economical: he gives the second line of each stanza the same music as the first line. His cheerful tune does not conflict with the tone of the poem—unless it could be said that it sounds too innocent for the character in Campion's version—but it does not give any noticeable emphasis to any element or otherwise enhance the effect of the poem. In comparison with Corkine's simple tune, Campion's setting seems awkward and strange. One critic was moved to say that its "irregular metres" seem "to have been dictated by musical whim rather than by attention to words."²¹ Looking at the printed song, perhaps humming to oneself, one might well ask why Campion gives so many single syllables two notes (a characteristic of several of the later songs), why he changes the rhythm from duple to triple so frequently, why he dwells on some syllables and hurries over others. But after singing it with the character of the persona in mind—mocking, not always suppressing laughter—and after correcting the underlay of the words (in the Fellowes edition), one begins to discover effective possibilities. In the opening phrase, laughter bubbles near the surface in the ascending eighth notes, and in the last phrase, it seems to burst out on "Parats" and "speech," and at these points in subsequent stanzas, especially the last (ex. 5). This setting is not "dramatic" in

Ex. 5



the same way the Italian-influenced declamatory songs are; it is rather a development of the older illustrative style.

This kind of imaginative solution did not seem available to Campion when he came to his "I must complain" after John Dowland had set it in 1603. The poem is not one of Campion's best efforts. He had captured its essence in two of his Latin epigrams, "In Melleam," and "Ad Cambricum," in fewer lines.²²

I must complain, yet doe enjoy my Love;
She is too faire, too rich in lovely parts:
Thence is my grief, for Nature while she strove

²¹ Lowbury, Salter, and Young, p. 162.

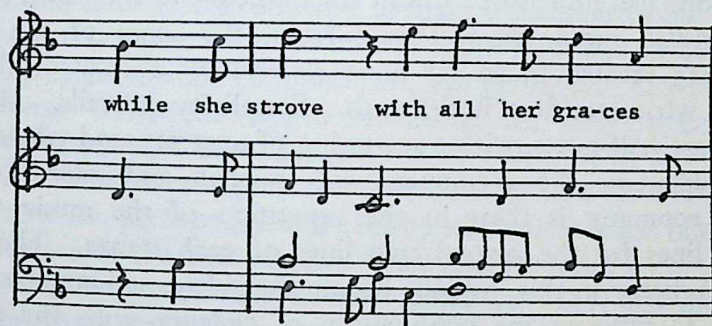
²² Davis, *Works*, pp. 426-427, 436-437.

With all her graces and divinest Arts
 To form her too too beautifull of hue,
 Shee had no leasure left to make her true.

Should I agriev'd then wish shee were lesse fayre?
 That were repugnant to mine owne desires:
 She is admir'd, new lovers still repayre,
 That kindles daily loves forgetfull fires.
 Rest iealous thoughts, and thus resolve at last,
 She hath more beauty then becomes the chast.

It is not as well constructed for musical setting as most of Campion's songs, for the third line runs strongly over into the fourth, and the fourth into the fifth. This enjambment is not matched in the second stanza. Since the musical phrases in these airs generally correspond to the lines of verse, with cadences on the rhyme words, enjambment poses a problem. As Hollander shows, Dowland solves the problem by keeping the accompaniment moving over the break between lines three and four.²³ He keeps the break in the solo line to a bare minimum (a quarter-rest) and picks up immediately the stepwise ascension (ex. 6). Since the mood of the poem alters somewhat in

Ex. 6



line five, he allows more of a definite cadence at the end of line four; but the voice resumes again after only a quarter-rest break. Other aspects of Dowland's version point to his great skill as a composer of songs. The accompaniment is full of fluid motion, and shows its affinity to the polyphonic accompaniments of the old consort songs. His setting of "Thence is my grief" and "Shee is admir'd" is an extended wail expressing the grief and the cause of it (ex. 7). As

²³ Hollander, p. 74; see also Diana Poulton, *John Dowland* (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), pp. 283-284.

Ex. 7

Thence is my grieve

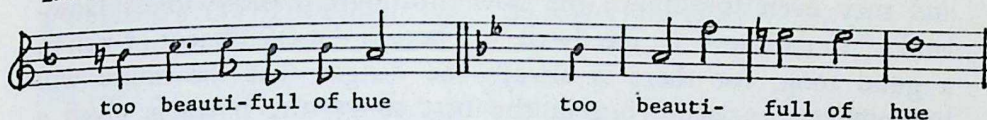
this passage suggests, Dowland is not stingy with musical material: he sets each line of the stanza to fresh music, and uses a variety of note values ranging from an eighth to a dotted whole-note. As in many airs, the last phrase is marked with a repeat; but instead of repeating the last two lines, as is the common practice with six-line stanzas, he repeats only the last line, and thus avoids a break between enjambed lines. This separation emphasizes the epigrammatic quality of the line, which is further reinforced by changes in musical texture from polyphonic to chordal and from duple to triple time. Here (and on "enjoy" in line 1) Dowland allows himself to repeat the words ("She had no leisure") both for musical and rhetorical effect—they intensify, rather than detract from, the sense of the poem.

Campion's setting, in so far as it reflects his theory of the air, illustrates what sacrifices it demands. Simplicity prevails. Most of the notes are half-notes, with a scattering of quarters, and whole-notes on the cadences; the accompaniment is plain and chordal. The Campion economy is there in the repetition of the music of the first two lines for the second two lines of each stanza. The four-square symmetry in this instance becomes rigidity, as Campion makes no effort to mitigate the conjunction of cadence with the end of enjambed lines. Not only are there whole-note cadences on the third and fourth lines, but the run-on lines begin with half-rests in both voice and accompaniment. The last two lines are repeated despite the enjambment into line 5, and despite Dowland's example. The economy of material and the lack of any strikingly expressive or imitative musical effects may be a result of theoretical restraint, but the treatment of the enjambed lines seems at best careless, and at worst an abandonment of Campion's own desire to "couple my Words and Notes lovingly together." One further detail shows Campion ignoring Dowland's example in a slight but telling instance. Dowland sets the word "beautiful" in line five according to its

natural stress, pitch, and rhythm. Campion gives it an awkward pitch-stress on "ti-" by an upward leap of a sixth (ex. 8).

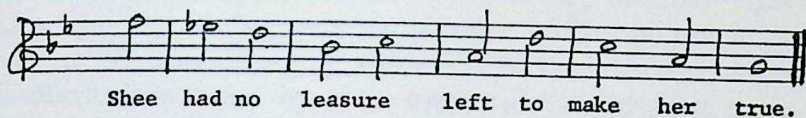
Ex. 8 Dowland

Campion



If we could somehow hear Campion's song without Dowland's echoing in our ears, we might find it pleasant enough, if not one of his best. The last line of each stanza is set to a gracefully descending broken curve (ex. 9). But it is a far cry from Campion's best songs—

Ex. 9



most of them early, like "When to her lute," "It fell on a sommers day," and "Followe thy faire sunne"—and it is hard to see how it could be considered a "correction" of Dowland's in any way.

These analyses show, I think, that Campion was mainly concerned to provide settings that added a pleasant dimension to his poems, but would not compete with them. In some instances he is successful, holding his own with the musicians, yet giving a sensitive reading of his poem. When he is less successful, the cause seems to be a weakening of the musical imagination, or a distrust of it. The "four-square" quality some critics complain of suggests a kind of mechanical craft at work, perhaps the craft of the amateur that has not developed into the art of the professional. Campion's treatise on *A New Way of Making Fowre Parts in Counter-point* (c. 1614) has the virtue of the amateur escaping from traditional methods,²⁴ but it has the vice of trying to propose an all-purpose formula for complex creative processes—it smacks of a kind of musical Ramism in its bold simplifying. No doubt this apparently simple "how-to" approach accounts for its popularity in the later publications of John Playford. But the sad fact remains, for Campion and other musically-inclined poets, that the ultimate success or failure of a song *as song* depends largely on the music. A good poem can live independent of music, even though music assisted in its birth (as with Burns and Thomas Moore). And some poems are too rich to permit translation into song. With

²⁴ Davis, *Works*, p. 322, quoting Manfred Bukofzer.

song, however, it is a law of nature that good music may carry a weak text, but that a good text cannot overcome the inertia of weak music.²⁵ A song may be much better than the poem that inspired it, and may even transfigure the poem through music—witness Dowland's "In darknesse let me dwell." There is the excitement of risk in a good song, for there is always the danger that the music will overpower the poem; but in the best songs, the poem is given a new and heightened life. It is evident that Campion was not always successful in giving his poems this new dimension through music. But that he was ever able to do so, after having written the poems as well, is no small achievement.

²⁵ Cf. Lowbury, Salter, and Young, p. 35, and Mark Booth, "The Art of Words in Song," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 62 (1976), 242.

BRIDGET GELLERT LYONS*

"Kings Games": Stage Imagery and Political Symbolism in "Richard III"

"We Princes," Queen Elizabeth said in 1586 to a deputation of her Lords and Commons, "are set on stages in the sight and view of all the world duly observed." She was speaking of the need to observe all the proprieties in dealing with Mary Queen of Scots, and of the blame that she herself would incur if she made a false step. Two years earlier, an ambassador to her court had offered a somewhat more cynical appreciation of her acting talents: "She is a Princess who can act any part she pleases." The two quotations can be taken to illustrate diverging views of royal theatricality.¹ According to Elizabeth, it was not by their own will that princess were "set on stages," constrained to play a part that was largely prescribed for them, to a "duly" observing public. But the French ambassador suggested another possibility about her theatricality when he hinted that the Queen's grief over the death of one of her suitors may not have been entirely sincere. He suggested that the Queen's acting talent made her flexible, and that it could be put in the service of her pleasure or her will.

While a degree of tension between the two kinds of performance was evidently felt by some observers of Elizabeth's reign, her ability to combine them effortlessly was even more apparent.² Her en-

* Bridget Gellert Lyons, an Associate Professor of English at Rutgers, is the author of *Voices of Melancholy*.

¹ J. E. Neal, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments, 1584-1601* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1957), p. 119, and J. E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I: A Biography* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), p. 263. Both citations are used by Stephen J. Greenblatt, *Sir Walter Raleigh: The Renaissance Man and His Roles* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 52, and p. 187, n. 39.

In this paper, all references to Shakespeare's plays are to the Peter Alexander edition (London: Collins, 1958). In all quotations, u and v have been regularized.

² See, for instance, Neale, *Queen Elizabeth*, pp. 59-63, for a description of the pageantry, allegorical shows, etc., that preceded Elizabeth's coronation, and for some criticism (again, by foreign legates) of the personal stamp that she put on these proceedings, which she obviously enjoyed thoroughly.

joyment of pageantry, lavish costumes, and allegorical shows that extolled her mythical virtues also managed to express, with astute political sense, her love for her people and her feeling of kinship with them. In particular, as Frances Yates has shown, Elizabeth was adept at using the symbolism and ceremony of the past, chivalric and religious, for new ends. The iconography formerly associated with the cult of the Virgin Mary was used with some daring to promote her own cult as the "state Virgo,"³ and portraits of Elizabeth drew on every kind of symbolism that the Renaissance had to offer—Neoplatonic, Petrarchan, Catholic, Imperial—to portray her as the head of the reformed empire.⁴

The public management of royal symbols, because it was so conspicuous a feature of Elizabethan political life, is central to an understanding of Shakespeare's history plays. Since sacramental and ceremonial spectacle has always had close affiliations with historical drama, symbolic ritual is an important feature in all of these plays, in which crowns and thrones, coronation pageants, enthronement scenes, formal trials and royal entrances into cities, as well as other examples of spectacle, can be found. But while the sanctity of public ceremony is one of their subjects, the plays are not ceremonies for the audience. Their icons and stage images do indeed convey meanings—often conventionally and historically sanctioned ones, which iconographic scholarship can be helpful in recovering for the modern reader—but these meanings are inseparable from the dramatic situations of which they form a part. For this reason, critics who wish to interpret the history plays iconographically, concentrating on the traditional meanings of the stage images they present, must, like foreign legates at Elizabeth's court, see royal symbolism with its received meanings as interwoven with the willfulness of monarchs and the fluctuations of political situations.

When Shakespeare wrote *Richard III*, Machiavelli had already demonstrated the importance to a ruler of being able to manipulate appearances:

Men, on the whole, judge more by the eye than by the hand;
because anyone can see, but it is permitted to few to touch.

³ Frances A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 76-80.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-20, esp. p. 116.

STAGE IMAGERY AND POLITICAL SYMBOLISM IN "RICHARD III" 19

Everyone sees what you seem to be, few understand what you really are The herd is always taken in by appearances⁵

Richard associates himself with this aspect of Machiavellian theory, as well as with the villainous stereotype of the stage machiavel, when he declares himself in 3 *Henry VI* (III, ii, 182-92) to be like Proteus and other skillful deceivers. From the start of *Richard III*, he is proud of his ability to manage appearances. Stage imagery is therefore an extremely important feature of the play, not merely to convey abstract meanings about Richard's evil nature,⁶ but to express his skill, and later his failures, as a machiavellian manipulator of images. The iconography of the play functions differently during Richard's rise to power, when images of kingship and authority, however constant in their meanings, can be used by him for his own ends, than it does when he is king, and he is unable to project a real connection between himself and the signs of his office. In the latter part of the play, the symbols of kingship are shown with special emphasis to have the inviolable force that they would have in the commonplace books; they cannot be appropriated by a usurper without obvious dissonance and incongruity. If the use of royal symbolism at the end of the play seems simple and idealistic, it is no more so than the play's plot, in which the villainous king is punished and the man with sacred and unquestioned rights to the throne triumphs. The iconography of the play expresses its dramatic action.

From the start, as the second scene in the play with Lady Anne demonstrates, Richard seems able to wield others to his will by controlling their sense of what they are seeing, as well as what they are hearing. While language and visual image cannot, of course, be separated, it is not language alone that has won over Lady Anne; in Richard's retrospective triumph, it is "the plain devil and dissembling looks" (I, iii, 236). With a great deal of irony, he comments on how different Anne's image of him must now be from his own:

Upon my life, she finds, although I cannot,
Myself to be a marv'llous proper man.
I'll be at charges for a looking-glass,

⁵ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. and intro., A. Robert Caponigri (Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1963), p. 96.

⁶ Soji Iwasaki's often illuminating iconographic study of the play emphasizes, for the most part, Richard's visual connections with such figures as Saturn, Time, and Death. *The Sword and the Word: Shakespeare's Tragic Sense of Time* (Tokyo: Shinozaki Shorin, 1973), first section.

And entertain a score or two of tailors
To study fashions to adorn my body . . . (I, ii, 253-57)

If Richard is able to surmount his physical appearance in people's minds, as he does in becoming a prospective husband for Lady Anne and in appearing like a straightforward, friendly person to Hastings (III, v, 50-55), he is able also to use his deformity when it suits his purposes, drawing from it meanings that further his plot. When Richard turns against Hastings, he accuses Mistress Shore (and, by association, Hastings) of witchcraft simply by displaying his deformed arm, and making the council dwell on the image of his deformity:

Then be your eyes the witness of their evil.
Look how I am bewitch'd; behold, mine arm
Is like a blasted sapling wither'd up.
And this is Edward's wife, that monstrous witch,
Consorted with that harlot strumpet Shore,
That by their witchcraft thus have marked me. (III, iv, 69-74)

At this point in the play, Richard is sufficiently powerful politically that he can draw from the images he presents to others the meanings that are most useful to him. Other examples of Richard's command of appearances are evident in the tableaux that he stages in the earlier part of the play when he is rising to power. A striking instance is his and Buckingham's appearance in "rotten armor" when they convince the Lord Mayor that they have been defending London, and that their illegal acts are therefore justified by a state of emergency (III, v). An even more subtle example of state-management occurs when partly through Richard's doing, the Prince of Wales is deprived of the triumphant entry into London that a prospective king was entitled to.⁷ While there are some trumpets and attendants for the Prince (III, i), he "want[s] more uncles here to welcome" him, and he is melancholy from the "crosses on the way" (III, i, 4-6). The traditional welcome of a city to its king, associated with the joy of his subjects and the fertility of nature,⁸ is

⁷ For the Prince's entrance as a "muted" version of the triumphal entry, with ominous associations, see Alice V. Griffin, *Pageantry on the Shakespearean Stage* (New Haven: College and University Press, 1951), pp. 41-42, and Martha Hester Fleischer, *The Iconography of the Elizabethan History Play* (Salzburg: Salzburg Studies in English Literature, 1974), pp. 60-61.

⁸ The progresses of Queen Elizabeth I were often associated with a pastoral nature that was both enlivened and tamed by her; it was only at her departure

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turned here into melancholy and impending death as the Prince, with justified forebodings, agrees to spend the time before his coronation in the Tower.

The most telling example, however, of Richard's ability to manipulate symbolic imagery—one that stands out because of the elaborateness of its preparation and the length of time it takes in performance—is the great scene (III, vii) where he pretends to refuse the crown that is being pressed upon him by Buckingham, the Lord Mayor, and a group of well-coached citizens. The scene has been orchestrated in advance by Buckingham with Richard, and their skill is demonstrated in its visual details and in the public significance that they make it communicate. Central to the scene is Richard's appearance with a prayer book, "*aloft, between two Bishops*" according to the stage direction, and Buckingham's gloss or "holy descant" (III, vii, 49) on how religious Richard is. Richard's appearance, however, does more than suggest his supposed piety. His strategically lofty eminence, as well as the bishops on either side of him, form a visual emblem of kingship, suggesting the coronation ceremony itself.

The sources of the image of the king flanked by bishops in the visual arts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance have been traced by Meyer Schapiro.⁹ According to his account, the image had its origin in the Biblical story of Moses' defeat of Amalek. In the 17th chapter of Exodus, Moses, accompanied by Aaron and Hur, is described as watching the battle of his troops from a hill, with the "rod of God" in his hand. When Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; when he dropped his hand, Amalek prevailed. So to ensure the victory of the Israelites, Aaron (the archetype of the priest) and his brother-in-law, Hur, held up Moses' hands while he sat on a stone. The story of Moses, supported on each side by Aaron and Hur, was transformed in the Middle Ages into a Christian image (Moses' supported arms being thought to resemble a cross),¹⁰

that death and mourning were represented as taking over (Griffin, pp. 134-36). Traditionally the king's entry into a city was accompanied not only by the acclaiming shouts of the populace, but also with flower-strewing that symbolized his association with the fertility of nature. For a discussion of the iconography of royal entries, associated with Christ's entry into Jerusalem or with Solomon, the "Expected One," entering Zion, see Ernst H. Kantorowicz, "The 'King's Advent' and the Enigmatic Panels in the Doors of Santa Sabina," *The Art Bulletin*, XXVI, no. 4 (December 1944), 207-31.

⁹ *Words and Pictures: On the Literal and the Symbolic in the Illustration of a Text* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1973).

¹⁰ On the Christian significance commonly read by the Church Fathers into the image of Moses with his arms extended, see Jean Daniélou, *Sacramentum*

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and it was therefore incorporated into the iconography of theocratic kingship. The medieval king, like the Renaissance one, was anointed by the Church (a fact that Richard himself alludes to later in the play), and the visual representation of this relationship between the king and the Church was the image of the king flanked by bishops or by saints in episcopal dress.

The image of the Christian king flanked by bishops made its way into the English literary tradition; in the legendary history of King Arthur, for instance, Geoffrey of Monmouth described Arthur brought to his coronation by two bishops.¹¹ Accounts of actual coronations, furthermore, were popular in 16th-century England; for example, a detailed account (with no literary pretensions) of the coronation of Henry IV of France in the 1590's was translated into English; that account too describes the King brought into the coronation hall, "according to the custome," by two bishops.¹² Or, to take a British example that preceded the writing of Shakespeare's play by some years, a picture attached to Stephen Hawes' meditation on the coronation of Henry VIII shows Henry and Katharine of Aragon, crowns poised above their heads by the bishops that are flanking each of them, while above the royal couple are displayed their emblems: the rose of Henry, the pomegranate of Katharine.¹³ The most important example for Shakespeare's purposes occurred in a principal source for the play, Holinshed's *Chronicles*. Holinshed describes the procession of Richard III to his coronation at some length, and when he comes to the King himself he reports: "And on everie side of the king there went one bishop, that is to saie, the bishop of Bath, and the bishop of Durham." Queen Anne is similarly accompanied in the procession: "Then followed queene Anne daughter to Richard earle of Warwike in robes like to the king, between two bishops...."¹⁴

Futuri: Études sur les origines de la typologie biblique (Paris: Beauchesne, 1950), pp. 145-46 and 195-96. This figure was well known in Renaissance iconography: see, for example, the second emblem in *The Heroicall Devises of M. Claudius Paradin* (London, 1591), which explains the hieroglyphical significance of the large letter T on the basis of the Moses-Amalek story and the Cross.

¹¹ Cited by Schapiro, n. 42.

¹² *The Order of the Ceremonie observed in the anointing and Coronation of the most Christian King of France and Navarre, Henry the III, of that name . . .*, translated by E. A. (London, n. d.), B_{2v}.

¹³ Stephen Hawes, *A Joyfull medytacyon to all Englonde of the coronacyon of our moost naturall soverayne lorde kynge henry eyght* (London, n. d.).

¹⁴ Raphael Holinshed, *The Third volume of Chronicles* (London, 1587), p. 733.

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Shakespeare's transposition to the gallery scene of the conventional pictorial detail of the two bishops shows that his interest in iconography was primarily dramatic. He shifted this vivid detail from Holinshed's pageantry of coronation to the scene where Richard wishes to be perceived as the true king, and where the symbolism of coronation becomes an important part of his performance. There are no bishops present in the gallery scene as Holinshed describes it;¹⁵ it is Shakespeare who has amplified the scene iconographically, in accordance with his portrait of Richard as a master of deceptive stage management. And Buckingham, glossing the scene for the benefit of the crowd, gives the picture its motto and text, emphasizing not only Richard's piety but also his potential royalty in language that makes explicit the picture's traditional connections between king and clergy. The bishops, according to Buckingham, are "Two props of virtue for a Christian prince,/To stay him from the fall of vanity" (III, vii, 97-98). Insistently throughout the scene Buckingham explains the connection between religious principle and rulership, and when he draws Richard into the scene more actively as a participant, he addresses him by his familial, royal titles: "Famous Plantagenet, most gracious Prince" (III, vii, 100).

However sceptical his audience may be in accepting Richard's shameless presentation of himself and denigration of Edward and his heirs, he is, at this point in the play, in command of the tableaux which he presents and of their symbolic meanings. His language at the end of the scene, for example, seems to transform his deformity emblematically. He suggests that the "burden" of kingship which he is reluctantly agreeing to assume is a cross that he has to bear, like his hunchback, or that he is like the emblem representing religious Hope as a man with Fortune's wheel strapped to his back, who walks along, doubled over by his burden, yet supported by the staff of Hope:¹⁶

¹⁵ Neither Sir Thomas More's *History of King Richard III* (Holinshed's source for Richard's early career) nor Holinshed (pp. 731-32) has the bishops in the gallery scene. Shakespeare seems to have incorporated and expanded this detail from Edward Hall's *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York* (see the passage quoted in the Furness Variorum edition of *Richard III*, p. 484).

¹⁶ See Gilles Corrozet's emblem, "Esperance Conforte Lhomme," in *Hecatomgraphie* (Paris, 1543), G_{IIIV} (reproduced in Arthur Henkel and Albrecht Schöne, *Emblemata: Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts* [Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1976], col. 1806). The text of this picture of a man trudging along with fortune's wheel strapped

Since you will buckle fortune on my back,
 To bear her burden, whe'er I will or no,
 I must have patience to endure the load . . . (III, vii, 228-30)

Whether or not a specific emblem was intended, Richard's method has affinities with the emblematic one; he is suggesting to the audience an image that is appropriate to his supposed reluctance and that is rich with moral meaning. His deformed figure is transformed by his language into an emblem of Christian patience and endurance, in line with the image of himself between two bishops as one associated with Christian kingship.

But while Shakespeare demonstrates, in *Richard III*, how traditional emblems and visual images can be misused, he does not (as he does in *Richard II*) call into question the meanings that such images convey. Richard himself depends on the stable meanings of symbols of kingship (including the coronation tableau whose history has just been considered), since he wants to attach them to himself. Rather, the last part of the play creates drama by revealing the distance between the false king and the emblems and ceremonies of royalty, showing that Richard, a usurper, cannot make the two fit together. The aural and visual symbols which he tries to appropriate to his own purpose exert a power that he cannot control once he actually becomes king.

A jarring note for any audience occurs in the pivotal scene right after his coronation (IV, ii), when with a great deal of pomp (Stage direction: "*Sound a sennet. Enter Richard, in pomp, as King . . .*") he ascends the throne, the seat of majesty, rich (as many commentators have shown) with symbolic significance as the source of theocratic power.¹⁷ But in the scene we are considering, the

to his back, the first part of which is perhaps relevant to Richard's sense of having been played a bad trick by Nature (I, i, 18-22), reads:

Si fortune soustiens, et porte,
 Qui m'a fait un tour inhumain:
 Je tiens esperance en la main,
 Qui me conduit, et me conforte.

It is interesting to note that at least one other emblem of Corrozet's, that of a man with a bow and arrow aiming for a target, with the motto "*Parler peu & venir au point*," (A_{IIIV}-B; Henkel and Schöne, col. 1068), may have found its way into Shakespeare's work with Lear's injunction to Kent to break off a long sentence and get to the point: "The bow is bent and drawn; make from the shaft" (*King Lear*, I, i, 142).

¹⁷ There is a detailed treatment of this subject, with several illustrations of late-medieval thrones, in Percy E. Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik: Beiträge zu ihrer Geschichte vom dritten bis zum sechzehnten*

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effect of the throne's importance is to underline the inappropriateness of Richard's presence and actions there. Mounted on the throne with great flourishes, presumably for the first time, he asks everyone but Buckingham to withdraw ("Stand all apart," IV, ii, 1), thus dramatizing in visual terms that his eminence is not the summit of society's pyramid, but a lonely perch occupied by him alone in the temporary company of his accomplice in crime.¹⁸ The royal seat of England, separated in this way from the society to which it is meant to give order and coherence, becomes the private place where Richard plots the murder of the legitimate ruler, and where he is unable to assert his authority even over his accomplice (Buckingham hesitates to obey his wish to get rid of the two princes at this point).

Richard is now incapable of sustaining the ceremonial behavior that his crown and his position on the throne seem especially to call for. While he had been adept at using courtly language when he needed to earlier (for instance, in wooing Lady Anne), Buckingham's refusal to take his hints forces him to become brutally direct: "Shall I be plain? I wish the bastards dead" (IV, ii, 18). His murderous plotting is the opposite of kingly, and that point is soon enforced by the image of King Richard, descended from the throne which is still presumably within sight, brooding, soliloquizing, and entering into whispered private conversation with the assassin, Tyrrel.¹⁹ Visually, then, the scene is a highly effective one in which the throne, with its associations of legitimate authority, simply emphasizes by contrast Richard's crime and isolation, and his inability to sustain any kind of kingly language or gestures.

Richard's inability to project, except in a dissonant way, the meanings of the symbols with which he publicly associates himself is especially apparent in the significance that his own emblem or crest, the boar, acquires as the play progresses. The emblems that noblemen or noble families took for themselves in the Renaissance were public symbols of their honor and worth, displayed particularly

Jahrbundert. Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae historica, no. 13 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1954-56), esp. vol. 3, ch. 42, and plates 134, 135, and 148.

¹⁸ This and the following point are made by Iwasaki, pp. 61-62. For a picture of King Henry VIII seated on his chair of state as the apex of two semi-circles formed by his courtiers, see the illustration from John Foxe's "Book of Martyrs" (*Acts and Monuments*, 1570), reproduced in Yates, Pl. 5b.

¹⁹ Many Shakespearean editors omit the interpolated stage direction at line 27, "Descends from throne." Richard's behavior, however, appears just as incongruous—probably even more so—if he remains seated on the throne throughout the scene.

on ceremonial occasions. Perhaps because such public emblems were artificial vestiges of the replicas of fierce animal forms that the leaders of primitive people took into battle to frighten the enemy,²⁰ the insignia of great noblemen tended to emphasize the aggressive aspects of animals: the lions of kings of Britain, the wolf that was an emblem of the Duke of Blois, or even the porcupine whose bristles warded off his enemies, the emblem of Louis XII of France.²¹ While occasionally a prince might associate himself with the gentler animals: the hen and its young, for example, signifying the ruler's motherly care for his people, or the domesticated ox, reaching its goal "step by step," as the motto explained,²² the fiercer animals generally predominated, though it was a fierceness controlled by frozen, heraldic postures, or by the crown or other insignia of rule which were also present in the picture. Richard was therefore not unusual in taking as his emblem a fierce and unpleasant animal, whose aggressive qualities could be dramatized.

In Shakespeare's play, however, Richard's emblem loses its abstract, noble qualities, and becomes naturalized by the language of his victims and opponents. They are the ones who interpret it, and they stress only the ruthlessly destructive, sub-human qualities of the boar. Richard, in other words, is unable or unwilling to assert those qualities of the fierce animal—its courage or its strength²³—which would make it an appropriate symbol for him. It is entirely possible that the boar-crest itself, on banners or shields, was displayed

²⁰ This idea is suggested in some Renaissance treatises on impresas and personal emblems. See for example *The Worthy Tract of Paulus Iovius*, translated by Samuel Daniel (London, 1585). In the opening epistle to Daniel, the writer ("N.W.") speculates on the functions of insignia: "Then what was the intent of these Ensignes and Devises? What cause can bee pretended for them? What did they import? *Iamblicus* saith that they were conceiptes, by an externall forme representing an inward purpose: So *Fergusus* the first Scottish King did beare in his Standard a *Lion geules*, to bewray his courage testifie his stomacke, and dismaie his adversarie, which being well marshalled, is borne for the atchivement of Kinges ever since."

²¹ See Paradin's *Devises*, p. 27, for the porcupine and the wolf.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 350.

²³ While most emblems in which boars figured did not glorify the animal, there were some, even among those that were not personal emblems, that did. An example can be found in Joachim Camerarius, *Symbolorum & Emblematum ex Animalibus Quadrupedibus Centuria* (Nuremberg, 1595), no. 48 (p. 56), where a heroic death for one's country is figured by a boar running into a hunter's spear, with the motto *AUT MORS AUT VITA DECORA*. (Reprinted in Henkel and Schöne, col. 478.) Richard's boar is described in Holinshed's somewhat moralized language as "The proud bragging white bore (which was his badge) . . ." p. 760.

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to Elizabethan audiences of the play,²⁴ as it was to modern audiences of Laurence Olivier's film version. If so, the pictured emblem functioned as a commentary on those aspects of Richard's career which are least kingly in any positive sense. Here again, Shakespeare expands possibilities that were raised only very briefly in his source. In Shakespeare's play, the boar not only razes the head of Stanley in his dream, as it does in Holinshed's account, it is the terrifying animal that threatens the life of the hostage-son of Stanley, prisoner in the "sty of the most deadly boar" (IV, v, 2), and it becomes a rallying point, a negative image that Richmond can use to rouse Richard's enemies:

The wretched, bloody, and usurping boar,
That spoil'd your summer fields and fruitful vines,
Swills your warm blood like wash, and makes his trough
In your embowell'd bosoms—this foul swine
Is now even in the centre of this isle.... (V, ii, 7-11)

The standard that is supposed to provide an abstract, unifying symbol for Richard's own forces is robbed of its symbolic qualities and elaborated in naturalistic and horrifying detail by his enemy.²⁵

Like all of the play's stage-spectacle, Richard's insignia, visually or verbally evoked, function dramatically, not merely as static symbol or decorative pageantry catering to the audience's love of display. And in the last part of the play, as Richard loses control of the kingship, spectacle becomes especially important. One stage direction, as we have seen, reads "*Enter Richard, in pomp, as King*"; another reads "*Enter Richmond, Oxford, Sir James Blunt, Sir Walter Herbert, and Others, with drum and colours*" (V, ii)—an indication

²⁴ Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages, 1300-1600* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul and Columbia University Press, 1957-1972), 2 vols. in 3, offers material on the use of heraldic devices in pageants and in court performances (though not necessarily in the public theatres). See especially I, 105, 244, and his section "Emblematic Devices and Stage-plays at Court," II, 280-99. See also C. Walter Hodges, *The Globe Restored* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1954), pp. 78-81, on the recreation of a chivalric atmosphere in jousts and "barriers" through emblems and allegorical devices, and for comments on the shields in *Henry V* and *Pericles*.

²⁵ Holinshed avoids stripping the boar-image itself of its heroic qualities, though the idea seems to have occurred to Richard's contemporaries. When Holinshed quotes the famous doggerel rhyme of the period, "The Cat, the Rat, and Lovell our dog, Rule all England under an hog" (p. 746), he immediately adds that the only reason "boar" became "hog" in the poem was to preserve the rhyme. It seems at least as likely that the denigrating word "hog" was the original inspiration for the distich.

of the visual and aural ceremony with which the play abounds. But whereas Richard is able, earlier, to suggest the symbolism and ceremony of kingship by placing himself above his interlocutors between two bishops, it is precisely because he has used such images for his own advantage in his ascent to the throne that they lose, for him, their power to suggest publicly valuable qualities once he is king.

His inability to profit from royal ceremony expresses Richard's progressive inability to command any kind of language—visual or verbal—that testifies to more than his ruthless aspirations to power. On the verbal level, Queen Elizabeth points out to him, when he tries to get her consent to his marriage with her daughter, that all of his oaths—whether by his honor, his crown, or his “self,” whether by God or country—are meaningless because they have been misused. On the level of pomp and pageantry, Richard's efforts become more and more discordantly inappropriate also. When he meets the royal women he has wronged (IV, iv), he invokes ceremonial grandeur in desperate gestures that become almost comic—no longer the kind of comedy, however, that testifies to his exuberant mastery. The stage direction reads “*Enter King Richard and his Train, marching with drums and trumpets,*” but the flourishes and trumpets he commands are used to drown out the complaints of the women he has bereaved, complaints that he wants to minimize as the sound of scolding women:

A flourish, trumpets! Strike alarums, drums!
 Let not the heavens hear these tell-tale women
 Rail on the Lord's anointed. Strike, I say! [*Flourish. Alarums.*]
 Either be patient and entreat me fair,
 Or with the clamorous report of war
 Thus will I drown your exclamations. (IV, iv, 149-54)

The sound effects available to the leader of a nation's army are desperately called on to drown out the legitimate cries of the bereaved, and the King—the Lord's anointed as he grandly calls himself—who should stop in his progress to hear the pleas of the weak and helpless,²⁶ cannot do so because he has caused their miseries

²⁶ The conscious use of this tradition by Queen Elizabeth I is described at various points in the *Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, illustrated with historical notes by John Nichols (London: J. Nichols and son, 1823). In I, 39 (after Holinshed, p. 1172), for example, the theatrical metaphor is explicit as the Queen is described as stopping to hear the suit of any “baser personages,” or to accept their flowers: “So that if a man

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in the first place. When Queen Elizabeth says to him that his golden crown hides a forehead that should be branded (IV, iv, 140-41), the audience is once again made aware of the disparity between Richard and the most significant emblem of his office.

At the very end of the play, the signs and portents which Richard has previously managed to his own advantage (for example, when he deceives Edward regarding the identity of the "G" who is prophesied to murder his heirs) work against Richard, while he becomes increasingly convinced of their importance. He becomes superstitious, reading in nature omens that will possibly be destructive to him. The sun, which he commands to shine at the beginning so that he can cast a shadow on the ground with his deformed figure, "disdains," as he puts it, to shine at the end: "A black day will it be to somebody" (V, iii, 280). The dramatically inevitable end of his powerlessness to identify himself, even with noise and show, with the officially acceptable meanings of his crown or of his personal emblem, the boar, occurs in the account of his death. At this point, he receives no honors of any kind but is referred to simply as an animal ("the bloody dog is dead" V, v, 2), and the crown, taken from his corpse, is given to its rightful owner, who is told to restore it to its dignity: "wear it, enjoy it, and make much of it" (V, v, 7).

Richard III, then, is an optimistic play in its treatment of kingship, and one that is of course flattering to the Tudor monarchy that came in with Henry Richmond. The power of royalty and its symbols is never seriously questioned for the legitimate ruler, as it is in *Richard II*. Nonetheless, we can see, even in the earlier play, Shakespeare's ability to create dramatic interest out of what was recognized in his time as a significant tension between public symbols and the political purposes for which they were inevitably used. Unless such symbols could be seen as potentially insecure—susceptible to misunderstanding, ambiguity, or personal appropriation—they could be viewed only sacramentally or ceremonially, and it would be difficult to imagine subjects like kingship dramatically at all. The spate of history plays on the English public stage at the time *Richard III* was presented, however, is evidence that it was now natural to regard kingship dramatically: that is, to see the man and his role as potentially

shoulde say well, he could not better tearme the Citie of London that time, than a stage wherein was shewed the wonderfull spectacle, of a noble hearted Princesse toward her most loving People, and the People's exceding comfort in beholding so worthy a Sovereigne"

separable, and to see the symbolic trappings of kingship as possible vehicles of deception and self-aggrandisement. Even Holinshed's chronicle-account of English history points to the dramatic aspects of public ritual when he discusses Richard's staged acceptance of the crown:

And in a stage plaie, all the people know right well, that one plaieng the Soldan, is percase a sowter [shoemaker]; yet if one should can so little good, to shew out of season what acquaintance he hath with him, and call him by his owne name while he standeth in his maiestie, one of his tormentors might hap to breake his head (and worthie) for marring of the plaie. And so they said, that these matters be kings games, as it were stage plaies, and for the more part plaied upon scaffolds, in which poore men be but the lookers on. And they that wise be will meddle no further.²⁷

Richard III provides a simple example of the theatricalization of public symbols which Holinshed seems to see as a general condition of political life, because in the play it is the villainous king who misuses them and the rightful one—courageous, pious, interested in the unity and prosperity of the country—who embodies the stable and heroic qualities the symbols express. Nonetheless, Richard and his dynamic theatrics give us the most memorable and often the most engaging moments of the play of which he is the center. In subsequent history plays by Shakespeare, the lines between heroes and villains will be even less clearly drawn, and no king will be so true that he does not have to play “kings games.”

²⁷ Holinshed, p. 732.

JONATHAN RAMSEY*

The Prelusive Sounds of "Descriptive Sketches"

Many older discussions of the separate stages of Wordsworth's career have been challenged by a more integrative kind of criticism. We try now to see the poet's mind and art as a fairly coherent whole, and we believe less confidently that his career can be divided into an inconsequential apprenticeship, a sudden flowering of genius which sustained him off and on for the next decade, and then a rapid decline in imaginative strength. No one has yet, as far as I know, argued persuasively for the general artistic success of Wordsworth's poems written before 1797, or drawn new riches from the years of "Wordsworth's anti-climax."¹ Nor should we expect Wordsworth scholarship to move in this direction. We are not likely to find very much more "strength in what remains behind" in his early and late productions, but new interpretations will continue to discover more, and more complicated, continuities amid the changes which his sensibility and writing underwent.

Such a reassessment of Wordsworth is occurring partly because we now understand more profoundly just how "The Child is father of the Man." Wordsworth was remarkably right about the dialectic which promoted "the growth of a poet's mind." And if his development was not quite so organic and continuous as his obsessive revisions and rearrangements want us to believe, his work does repeatedly anticipate its future achievements while it reflects and feeds upon its past. The poems are often, then, transitional, especially those written before *Lyrical Ballads*. During the period of his greatest energy and confidence, various psychological transitions are frequently the *subject* of the poems, whereas the earlier

* Jonathan Ramsey, an Assistant Professor at Skidmore College, is completing a book on Wordsworth, Language, and Silence.

¹ Willard Sperry, *Wordsworth's Anti-Climax* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1935) provides one of the more interesting, though in some respects untenable, accounts of Wordsworth's later years. John Jones, *The Egotistical Sublime* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1954), pp. 154-192, makes a judicious case for some of the late poetry. Lee M. Johnson, *Wordsworth and the Sonnet* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1973) has recently brought new appreciation to Wordsworth's sonnet sequences. Judging from James L. Hill's article "New Light on *The Excursion*," *Ariel* 5 (1974), 37-47, and from the fruits of the 1976 MLA special session entitled "Perspectives on Wordsworth's *Excursion*," we are likely to see some boost in the status of this poem.

works manifest growth and change through disturbing *disequilibriums* of style and content. Although ideally the entire range of Wordsworth's experiments from Hawkshead to Alfoxden should inform an integrative reading of his early works, the present essay focuses on the transitional nature of *Descriptive Sketches*. It is a poem in which ideas more characteristic of Wordsworth's mature style are coming into being. Geoffrey Hartman and, more recently, Paul Sheats have done most to advance our understanding of Wordsworth's early poetry, and they have shown specifically that *Descriptive Sketches*, as Coleridge noted in *Biographia Literaria*, significantly transmutes the picturesque traditions which heavily influenced Wordsworth's first descriptions of man and nature.² I have little disagreement with Hartman's and Sheats's superb treatments of imagery and epistemology in *Descriptive Sketches*; I differ from them, however, in regarding patterns of sound as a major continuity in the poem.

Descriptive Sketches is even more abrupt in style and psychologically discontinuous than its companion piece of 1793. *An Evening Walk* strains, I have argued elsewhere, to carry forward the prevailing customs of late eighteenth-century descriptive poetry but at the same time to heal the dualisms inherent in the picturesque habit of mind.³ *Descriptive Sketches*, Wordsworth's second ambitious effort to infuse sensation and reflection with a spirit rarely discovered in loco-descriptive verse, is more comprehensible than the earlier poem (but makes a less organized journey), more attentive to the activities of perception, includes a greater variety of historical, social, and political topics, is chronologically more flexible, and modally (picturesque and sublime) diverse. Replacing the elaborate and interconnected imagery of *An Evening Walk* is a series of sharply contrasted scenes, but scenes more intense and detailed than one might expect from "sketches." To some extent the awesome dimensions and surprising variety of the Alps themselves, so different from the more manageable variety of Lake District landscapes, are responsible for the disjointed construction of *Descriptive Sketches*. The assimilative powers of perception and language grapple weakly with Wordsworth's overawed response to such a landscape.

²S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. George Watson (New York: Dutton, 1965), pp. 46-47; Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 102-115; Paul D. Sheats, *The Making of Wordsworth's Poetry, 1785-1798* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1973).

³"Seeing and Perceiving in Wordsworth's *An Evening Walk*, *MLQ*, 36 (December 1975), 376-389.

But still another aspect of his sensibility, an aspect which seems in conflict with the mind's submission to nature's sublimity, contributes to the disjunctive *Sketches*: his subjectivity, even while it is astonished by the objects which confront it, aspires towards a tantalizing experience of grandeur that lies "Beyond the senses and their little reign."⁴ The pursuit of the "sense sublime" through intensified seeing and hearing dominates Wordsworth's early epistemology. This mode of knowing regards sense perception in an indecisive way: the eye and ear are invested at once with skepticism and faith, are distrusted as much for their incomplete knowledge as they are trusted to lead us beyond their ordinary limits. In his earliest depiction of "primalval Man" (*Descriptive Sketches*, 529), Wordsworth celebrates a way of life in which seeing through and with the eye (to adapt Blake's famous distinction) is experienced as nearly a single process.⁵ "Nature's child" (521), as he is called, sees not just "Rocks" of an austere solidity but "sainted Rocks" (542) which evoke "images of other worlds" (544) and finally connect him to "viewless realms" (548) unknown to, but anticipated by, corporeal sight. The natural man in this account possesses often and easily a vision of wholeness that usually eludes Wordsworth in his early poetry—"a feeling or image of intense unity, without a contemplation of parts," which the essay on "The Sublime and the Beautiful" offers as "that state of mind which is the consummation of the sublime."⁶ Thus *Descriptive Sketches*, despite its *tour de force* of imagery, founders as much from straining toward such a "consummation," actually competing against the magnificent landscape which occasioned the poem in the first place, as from the poet's amazed apprehension of the presented forms.

Subjective energies as powerful and overtaxed as those which inspired *Descriptive Sketches* needed some special help to give them artistic shape. Wordsworth found the promise of a structuring

⁴ *Descriptive Sketches* in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), I, 74. Unless stated otherwise, I refer always to the 1793 version of *Descriptive Sketches*. The *Poetical Works* will be cited hereafter as *PW*. Cf. 1794 MS additions to *An Evening Walk* in which Wordsworth claims for himself a nebulous vision of "worlds beyond the reign of sense" (B 53-4 in *PW*, I, 9).

⁵ *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1965), p. 555.

⁶ *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), II, 353-354. Hereafter cited in the text.

principle in the political and quasi-religious allegory which dominates especially the last one-quarter of the poem. Paul Sheats describes the influence of Ramond de Carbonnières and the French Revolution upon this provocative new direction in Wordsworth's poetry. But it is not so clear to me that *Descriptive Sketches* as a whole actually succeeds in its "natural supernaturalism." Sheats argues that "the Alpine landscape is framed within a panorama of Christian eschatology that emphasizes three events: the creation, the deluge, and, by implication, the millenium that was being realized before Wordsworth's eyes."⁷ Certainly this allegory of secular and sacred blendings directs Wordsworth's imagination at the poem's conclusion, but it does not gather much force as an ordering principle until after line 631, and only in the last one-hundred thirty lines, beginning with reflections on the valley of Chamonix at line 680, does a naturalized eschatology emerge to lend coherence to the poem's disjunctive beginnings.

However, if the promise of an eschatological scheme fails in the end to unify the sketches, there is another strategy of perception in the poem, and one allied to the incomplete allegorical frame, which runs throughout *Descriptive Sketches* and points forward to a major theme of *Lyrical Ballads*. From beginning to end *Descriptive Sketches* gives more attention to the presence and absence of sounds, and reflects more upon the moral and aesthetic suggestiveness of noise, tuneful harmonies, and silence, than any other poem of similar length from Wordsworth's hand. In the poem's 813 lines I count over two-hundred references to sound, most of them startling and loud. *An Evening Walk*, by comparison, contains about ninety sound effects within 446 lines, and perhaps ten of them are loud sounds, the rest pertaining to silence, to things "hardly heard" (434) even by the practiced listener, or to "soft stillness, with such various sounds/ Combined and linked" (A 311-28 in *PW*, I, 31). We can turn for another comparison to "The Vale of Esthwaite," whose gothic apparatus includes screaming owls, "clanking chains," and a minstrel's harp that "Shrieks at his shoulder sharp and shrill" (*PW*, I, 271). Even within this context of melodrama and onomatopoeia, the poem makes only ninety or so references to sound in the 569 lines preserved by de Selincourt.

These numbers are useful only as they tend to confirm what a close reading of *Descriptive Sketches* suggests strongly: the poem

⁷ Sheats, *The Making of Wordsworth's Poetry*, p. 65.

gives unusual attention to acute listening, all degrees and kinds of sound are presented with scrupulous care, nature in its sublime aspect is as aurally impressive as it is visually spectacular, and finally, Wordsworth gives new weight to a nascent "language" which belongs in common to man and nature:

How still! no irreligious sound or sight
Rouzes the soul from her severe delight.

An idle voice the sabbath region fills

Of Deep that calls to Deep across the hills... (430-433)

Silence is almost never absolute in the poem but rather, as in the quotation above, is itself a quality felt and heard and is usually blended, moreover, with a number of faint sounds "in a music of tranquillity" (1849 *Descriptive Sketches*, 363). Silence of this kind is an "idle voice" which "calls" forth a feeling of unbroken unity between the mind and nature. The experience seems also to summon other voices (434-439) into a single chorus in which, paradoxically for the senses, silence remains the dominant impression—until a boy's enthusiastic shouts of "savage joy" (441) disrupt the precarious "feeling of self-propagation infinitely continuous and without cognizable beginning" ("The Sublime and the Beautiful" in *Prose*, II, 352) and draw one back into his finite self.

Through these intricate textures of sound and silence we approach the universal language "Of things for ever speaking" ("Expostulation and Reply," 26), and speaking in accents appropriate to their separate identities but in tones that witness the life force common to all of them. Wordsworth's early presentation of sounds leads naturally toward the ontological importance ascribed to language in *Lyrical Ballads*. The more accomplished lyrics treat "language" as both a silent and audible activity in which all phenomena, things, and people participate. From this point of view, language becomes a fundamental, almost an intrinsic property of all existence, an indwelling potential which links every part of life to the whole. If such a concept of language is ultimately as abstract as discussions of the Logos necessarily become, Wordsworth reifies the topic to an extraordinary degree, not just to aid our understanding but because words, sounds, and even silence affected him as though they were actual substances. This commitment to interpreting "the speaking face of earth and heaven"⁸ begins to take shape in *Descriptive*

⁸ *The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, 2nd ed., rev. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), V, 13. Hereafter cited in the text.

Sketches and accounts in part for the poem's fascination with sounds.⁹

The astonishing range of murmurs, whispers, moans, sighs, musical tones, shouts, and thunderous roars in *Descriptive Sketches* starts to serve a speculative and conceptual purpose beyond picturesque description. Most of these efforts fall short of completion, as we see, for example, in the traveler's half-visionary perception of twilight sights and sounds. His mind teeming with impressions of the Grande Chartreuse and of Lake Como, and sequestered by "Silence [which] loves its purple roof of vines" (91), the traveler is moved to the threshold of what appears to be Wordsworth's "sense sublime":

The viewless lingerer hence, at evening, sees
From rock-hewn steps the sail between the trees;

Or, led by distant warbling notes, surveys,
With hollow ringing ears and darkening gaze,
Binding the charmed soul in powerless trance,
Lip-dewing Song and ringlet-tossing Dance... (92-99)

But he does not finally "see into the life of things," although his state of mind is similar to the "blessed mood" celebrated in "Tintern Abbey";¹⁰ instead, the traveler of *Descriptive Sketches* fixes his entranced attention on his sensuous environment, then wonders how Pliny viewed the same landscape many centuries before.

A similarly teasing phenomenon, one equally truncated, occurs again at Lake Como: "—Thy fragrant gales and lute-resounding streams,/Breathe o'er the failing soul voluptuous dreams" (156-157). The preceding descriptions have been especially rich in musical blendings of "lutes and voices" (134), the "matin-bell" (142), bird songs, and "the sound of oars" (144), all of which converge, as they often do in *Descriptive Sketches*, in a unified expression of religious service: "Slow swells the service o'er the water born,/While fill each pause the ringing woods of morn" (146-147). Wordsworth was not ready by the time he wrote *Descriptive Sketches* to disentangle the "religious" conception of language and the unity of

⁹ Wordsworth's catalogue of sounds owes something, of course, to well-worn conventions of Renaissance and eighteenth-century verse. For a description of this debt see Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry*, pp. 96-98; and John Hollander, "Wordsworth and the Music of Sound," *New Perspectives on Coleridge and Wordsworth*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman (New York and London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 67-79.

¹⁰ In *Descriptive Sketches* the scene itself, rather than the "mood" occasioned by it, is regarded as "bless'd" (*Descriptive Sketches*, 120).

being adumbrated in his verse from an enchantment with sense experience in its own right. The "idle voice.../Of Deep that calls to Deep" (432-433) and the hints of an immanent, universal language borne through "the ringing woods" remain as amorphous as "voluptuous dreams." More tantalizing than any of the examples already cited is the dream-like description of an Alpine valley filled with morning mist, a strange sea of "gloomy blue" (498) from whose "awful silence" (497) a mixture of mysterious and familiar voices issues forth:

Loud thro' that midway gulph ascending, sound
Unnumber'd streams with hollow roar profound.
Mounts thro' the nearer mist the chaunt of birds,
And talking voices, and the low of herds,
The bark of dogs, the drowsy tinkling bell,
And wild-wood mountain lutes of saddest swell. (504-509)

The close connections between this experience and the more famous ascent of Mt. Snowdon during a somewhat later walking tour (summer of 1791) with Robert Jones are intriguing. By the time Wordsworth conflated and reinterpreted the Alpine and Snowdon episodes for *The Prelude*, he was "By sensible impressions not enthralled" (XIV, 106), and so he gave us a more profound emblematic and psychological account of "the roar of waters, torrents, streams/Innumerable, roaring with one voice!" (XIV, 60-61). His early poetry does, as he was first to observe, subordinate "the inner faculties" (*Prelude*, XII, 147) to the eye and its objects.¹¹ Equally deserving of our attention, however, are the forces at work in *Descriptive Sketches* which question and push against the despotism of the senses. The poems of 1793 take us repeatedly to the brink of insights that Wordsworth articulated successfully just a few years later. And the patterns of sound in *Descriptive Sketches* make more advances than does the poet's eye in this new direction.

It is not merely metaphorical to say that language-as-sound constitutes a major ground of being in *Descriptive Sketches*. This is a theme or awareness only partially disclosed in the poem, for Wordsworth still owes some allegiance to the surfaces of experience (as objects and occurrences embodying truths independent from the

¹¹ See also *The Prelude*, III, 157-169, and XII, 127-151. Frank D. McConnell discusses the consequences of visual fixation in *The Confessional Imagination: A Reading of Wordsworth's "Prelude"* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1974), 99-145.

human mind) and to the outward forms of language (as a system of customary signs quite extrinsic to our processes of knowing). But the expressive potential of sound and silence does gain strength, and decibels, as *Descriptive Sketches* sweeps to an apocalyptic conclusion. The rivers that had been "murmuring" (4), "babbling" (28), and "groaning" (67) have repeatedly released their suppressed powers through the "crashing wood" (211), until finally they emit a "hollow roar profound" (505), a "dread peal" (552) of Liberty's resurgence, and a roar of "anger" (703). The winds too have risen from "whispers" of joy (18) and hope (443) to "shrill winds roaring" (716), a movement that borders on *The Prelude's* "correspondent breeze." As a constant undercurrent in the poem we hear sounds which originate just as often from man as from nature (and thus link the two realms aurally), remind us of the harmonies of life enduring beneath the discord of political and social oppression, and speak in a "Portentous" (75) voice of a life force seeking expression. The whole region seems to respire with the breathing of tutelary spirits as the "'parting Genius' sighs with hollow breath" (72); and yet still a "giant moan along the forest swells" (201) as though to witness the spirit's enduring presence, the mountain crags "Vibrate, as if a voice complain'd within" (250), and in the Unterwalden landscape the "native Genii" (419) are manifest again to sight, hearing, and the sense of smell—to hearing as an ambient "Soft music" (421), to which the smell of "sweetest perfume" (423) is a responsory sensation.¹²

Well before "Glad Day-light" (700) emerges in his full allegorical might to do battle with "The voice of Ruin" (693), these patterns of sound have alerted us that a giant in chains waits impatiently to proclaim life and liberty for all the oppressed of Europe:

All day the floods a deeper murmur pour,
And mournful sounds, as of a Spirit lost,
Pipe wild along the hollow-blustering coast,
'Till the Sun walking on his western field
Shakes from behind the clouds his flashing shield. (333-337)

Seldom does the *genius loci* of *Descriptive Sketches* confront us as a personified entity; rather, the redemptive spirit of place is presented

¹² For a concise and suggestive history of the *genius loci* in English literature, see Geoffrey Hartman, "Romantic Poetry and the *Genius Loci*," *Beyond Formalism: Literary Essays 1958-1970* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 311-336.

as a burgeoning energy which seeks expression through man as well as nature. Even in the allegorical passage just quoted, the genius is simply a power manifested throughout nature as a murmured preliminary to speech, as a mournful sound which precedes the poem's articulate lament, and as a half-formed music of wild piping. Prelusive and immanent though the *genius loci* may be, however, Wordsworth does not quite take a further step and treat the spirit as a power inherent in "the Mind of Man—/My haunt, and the main region of my song" (Preface to *The Excursion*, 40-41).

The incipient language of man and earth becomes, if anything, too manifestly audible when the ending of *Descriptive Sketches* transmutes all Wordsworth's reflective impulses into the *visibilia* of sublime allegory. Again in an effort to make imagination keep pace with "the almost uninterrupted succession of sublime and beautiful objects which have passed before my eyes during the course of the last month,"¹³ he projects the drama of Liberty's ascension onto an Alpine backdrop. Crowds of the diseased and maimed gather at the shrines of Einsiedlen to join their voices in a universal lament and prayer:

Mid muttering prayers all sounds of torment meet,
Dire clasp of hands, distracted chase of feet,
While loud and dull ascends the weeping cry....(656-658)

Thus the sounds of man's suffering and protest commingle with the groans of oppressed nature. In this fashion the motif of a nascent and unifying language is in some sense fulfilled in the badly orchestrated sounds which conclude *Descriptive Sketches*. As Wordsworth walks along the banks of the river Loiret just south of Orleans, the sounds of nature and of man's agrarian life swell to a chorus of surprising volume (760-771), becoming, in effect, the prelude strains of Liberty's cannonades, shouts, and alarm bells (774-779).

The poem gives us an early, clamorous version of the sounds which hint of their presence, subside, then re-emerge throughout *The Prelude*. In imagery that unites the aural and visual as a single experience, *The Prelude* summarizes the continuities of life which have sustained "the growth of a poet's mind." The primal energies of "the one Life within us and abroad" (Coleridge, "The Eolian Harp," 26), even when unheard and unseen, have continued to voice

¹³ Letter of 6 and 16 September 1790, in *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Chester L. Shaver, 2nd ed., rev. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), I, 32.

their subliminal rhythms: "we have traced the stream," Wordsworth concludes, "From the blind cavern whence is faintly heard/Its natal murmur" (XIV, 194-196). Although no such consummation of sight, sound, and the inward self can be claimed for *Descriptive Sketches* or for *An Evening Walk*, each poem severely tests the adequacy of old and new modes of perception and of received language practices. How different are the unremitting intensity and self-conscious labor of these works from the spirit of Wordsworth's more successful poetry:

While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things. ("Tintern Abbey," 47-49)

The "soft inland murmur" (4) and quiet eye of "Tintern Abbey" share a quality of harmony unknown to the "corporeal" senses while they hunt for stimuli; however, the Wordsworthian experience of sublimity requires a preliminary, active searching through the five senses. And since Wordsworth's early writing was itself an act of striving with the various potentials of language, we should not be surprised that the peaceful yet active coalescence of perception and language rarely occurs before *Lyrical Ballads*.

How can we finally account for the overabundance of sense impressions in *Descriptive Sketches*, and particularly for the poem's many configurations of sound, silence, language, music, and noise? The "impatient strength" of this poem, its "struggling crowd of images"¹⁴ attest to an uneasiness which, while it disrupts some of Wordsworth's early works, will lend dramatic tension to many later ones. He could not, either in 1792 or 1798, invest his faith absolutely in nature's plenitude, in the perfect fullness of the created world. An impression of wholeness, and of "similitude in dissimilitude" (*Prose*, I, 148), was won and maintained only through the most active perceiving. I have remarked that the supposed silences of *Descriptive Sketches* are usually filled with delicate textures of sound. If the traveler in the poem could rejoice with certainty, "No sad vacuities his heart annoy" (17), the "vacant worlds" (372) inhabited by the chamois-chaser presented a troubling contrast. Among Wordsworth's early poems, only *Salisbury Plain* (first version 1793-94) and *The Borderers* (written 1796-97) evoke the wasteland with such terrible

¹⁴ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, p. 46.

force as the chamois-chaser episode. Environed by the frozen silence of the Swiss Alps, the chamois-chaser struggles merely to survive:

Thro' vacant worlds where Nature never gave
 A brook to murmur or a bough to wave,
 Which unsubstantial Phantoms sacred keep;
 Thro' worlds where Life and Sound, and Motion sleep,
 Where Silence still her death-like reign extends,
 Save when the startling cliff unfrequent rends:
 In the deep snow the mighty ruin drown'd,
 Mocks the dull ear of Time with deaf abortive sound.
 (372-379)

The "strange/And extreme silentness" which draws the perplexed mind back in upon itself in Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight" is perhaps foreshadowed in the alienating landscape described here. The senses confront a vortex of inertia in the vacant winter landscape of *Descriptive Sketches*. Phantoms, appropriately "unsubstantial" like the non-sentient place they sanctify, work in the service of unconscious "sleep." Even the sound of an avalanche is reabsorbed into the "vast profound" (382) before it can signalize movement and the possibility of life. The incomprehensible sterility of this landscape foils perception: the birth of every stimulus is "abortive" in what amounts to an empty space in nature. The void is no place to "anchor...purest thoughts" ("Tintern Abbey," 109).

We have already noticed how attentive Wordsworth is to sounds existing almost below the threshold of hearing (as though silence were the procreative medium of sound), and how quickly these sounds aspire to the condition of music or to a state approaching the expressiveness of language. Even absolute silence is an ambiguous state which can imply potential as well as impotence. Thus the threatening silences in *Descriptive Sketches* are greatly outweighed by the silence associated with peaceful seclusion, meditative calm, and that special "repose" which anticipates and often seems to generate the soft "breathings" of life processes. In Wordsworth's early poetry, the contours of this uneasy faith in organic wholeness are largely embedded in sense experience and only tentatively defined, whereas later the belief grows more stylized and eventually becomes doctrinaire. The Wanderer will exhort the despondent Solitary to listen with "the ear of Faith" which hears, in all nature's "Murmurings,"

Authentic tidings of invisible things;
 Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
 And central peace, subsisting at the heart
 Of endless agitation. (*The Excursion*, IV, 1144-47)

The hopeful persuasion that nature never betrays those who love her into an empty, meaningless universe could be translated into a conviction about the unfailing presence of significant sounds: "Nature fails not to provide/Impulse and utterance" (*The Excursion*, IV, 1169-70). And by the time Wordsworth wrote "On the Power of Sound" (1828), his interpretations of sound and silence were no longer problematical, for an orthodox appeal to the Logos rescued such questions as, "O Silence! are Man's noisy years/No more than moments of thy life?" (*PW*, II, 330).¹⁵ Both *Descriptive Sketches* and "On the Power of Sound" give importance to the audible silence "Of Deep that calls to Deep" (cf. "On the Power of Sound," 204-205) and thus provide one more continuity between 1792 and 1828. The ear, whether "fleshly" (*Prelude*, II, 416) or supra-sensuous, could not choose but listen to the audible and the silent as they composed "One song" (*Prelude*, II, 415) of interanimating "joy."

¹⁵ Cf. the provocative readings of "On the Power of Sound" by John Jones, *The Egotistical Sublime*, pp. 188-192; and John Hollander, *New Perspectives on Coleridge and Wordsworth*, pp. 67-79.

DONALD M. KARTIGANER •

"A Ceremony of the Usual Thing": Notes on Kafka's Development

Reading Franz Kafka one becomes quickly aware of two worlds in tortuous relation: coming together, then moving apart, at once reaching out for and rejecting each other. One of them looks familiar enough, furnished with people, situations, and concerns of a world like our own—families in conflict, businesses and communities entangled in petty bureaucratic procedure. The other, as if lying between the strands of the first, is more mysterious—a monster behind the bedroom door, an unfathomable authority at the center of bureaucracy—something indefinable within the immediate that threatens and enhances it.

Kafka's importance to us is his exploration of these worlds, not as separate spheres but as interacting forces whose meetings can be times of terror or confusion or revelation. The style of these explorations is the Kafkaesque prose that undermines itself both as realistic and symbolic utterance: exposing in ordinary surfaces unsuspected depths, while dressing the ineffable in grotesque shapes or the most banal conventions of ordinary life. Kafka provides us with a here and now we can nearly taste—feeding our modern hunger for a candid, undisguised reality—then touches it with what Wallace Stevens calls the "dark italics," feeding that other hunger without which we are only half-human.

In describing these worlds in his diaries and letters Kafka falls back on a dualistic terminology probably borrowed from Flaubert and Kierkegaard, and consistent with nineteenth-century symbolist literature and modern literature generally. This is the division between what Kafka calls life and literature. Despite its decadent possibilities, the concern is not a trivial one; in Kafka it is a cornerstone of his personality and, in the fiction that dramatizes it, a subject of profound implication. Life for Kafka is the ordinary or human world, "*der Menschenwelt*": the earthly duties of earning a living and raising a family, the earthly pleasures of sex and food, music and philosophical reflection. Writing is what remains: not vocation or hobby,

• Professor Kartiganer is in the English Department at the University of Washington.

physical or mental pleasure, but identity unencumbered—"my real life."¹ It is a kind of purity—a form of prayer he once wrote—that stains each earth-bound act with spiritual intimations.

The image and meaning of life for Kafka were lodged in the figure of his father. Hermann Kafka was what living was about: successful businessman, husband, and father: "a true Kafka in strength, health, appetite, loudness of voice, eloquence, self-satisfaction, worldly dominance, endurance, presence of mind, knowledge of human nature" (*Dearest Father*, pp. 140-141). He excelled in virtually every facet of what Kafka considered the human world, and his precedence defined—and rendered untouchable—this world. "Sometimes," Kafka writes in the undelivered letter to his father, "I imagine the map of the world spread out flat and you stretched diagonally across it. And what I feel then is that only those territories come into question for my life that either are not covered by you or are not within your reach. And, in keeping with the conception that I have of your magnitude, these are not very comforting territories" (p. 191).

One of them is literature. It retains at least one vital connection with ordinary life—"My writing was all about you" (*Mein Schreiben handelte von Dir*)—but is also his protection against it: "safety... a chance to breathe freely" (*es gab ein Aufatmen*—pp. 176-177). Literature is the second sphere of being, taking as its subject matter a real world, yet itself a world apart, a sanctuary.²

¹ *The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1910-1913*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Joseph Kresh (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), p. 211. Further quotations from Kafka's works will be from the following translated editions: *The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1914-1923*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Martin Greenberg, with the co-operation of Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1949); *Dearest Father*, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (New York: Schocken Books, 1954); *Letters to Felice*, ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born, trans. James Stern and Elisabeth Duckworth (New York: Schocken Books, 1973); *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971); *The Trial*, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir, revised and with additional materials trans. E. M. Butler (New York: Random House, 1956); *The Castle*, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir, with additional materials trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (New York: Random House, 1969). Quotations from the German are from *Gesammelte Werke, herausgegeben von Max Brod* (New York: Schocken Books).

² Heinz Hillmann, *Franz Kafka, Dichtungstheorie und Dichtungsgestalt* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1964), discusses Kafka's desire to detach himself from life by means of art. Art makes possible a "stepping-out from reality"; "He stands no longer in the world in which man acts and suffers... but... in a spiritual-creative realm in which he is free" (p. 23).

Part of Kafka's complexity, however, and the greatness of his fiction, is that he can never really turn his back on the ordinary existence his father preempted. He was fond of quoting Flaubert's comment on those people who have no need for literature, who live contentedly in the midst of life: *Ils sont dans le vrai*.³ And in a diary entry in November 1914 he presents, with admiration, the dependable Mr. Chaim Nagel: "People who, within their sphere, do their work so thoroughly that you believe they could succeed in anything on earth—yet it is part of their perfection too that they don't reach out for anything beyond their sphere" (p. 97).

The indifference to what lies beyond both attracts and repels Kafka, for it is a fullness that also betrays a poverty, a blindness to possibilities beyond presence. The sphere of Chaim Nagel, of Hermann Kafka, of his two-time fiancée Felice Bauer, is the "living" Kafka envies and yet wishes to raise "into the pure, the true, and the immutable" (p. 187). This goal sometimes takes the form of a simple escapism, a desire to rid literary language of its bondage to things. In a diary entry of 1921 he expresses bitterness at writing's lack of independence, "*Die Unselbständigkeit des Schreibens*," "its dependence on the maid who tends the fire, on the cat warming itself by the stove"—a dependency that makes writing into "a joke and a despair" (p. 201). And in *The Metamorphosis* he dwells on the gap between the extraordinary and the ordinary, the necessarily grotesque poetic and the prosaic that rejects vision. But the desire to enrich the ordinary can also lead to a new sense of identity between living and writing. The "ordinary piping" of the mouse Josephine, for example, in Kafka's last completed story, becomes to her audience an aesthetic act. Josephine performs the commonest sound as a distinctive music. She makes "a ceremonial performance out of doing the usual thing" (*daß jemand sich feierlich hinstellt, um nichts anderes als das Übliche zu tun*).

The conflict of literature and life—and their larger implications—is a major concern in Kafka's letters to Felice Bauer (1912-1917). Kafka is here in the situation of conducting an epistolary courtship that is being defeated by nothing so much as the activity of correspondence itself. The intention of the letters is not a culmination in marriage or even the unequivocal assertion of a marriage vow. Rather, the object is to prolong the correspondence, to substitute for actual

³ Max Brod, *Franz Kafka: A Biography* (New York: Schocken Books, 1960), p. 98.

meeting and the marrying of bodies a continuous stream of relevant yet autonomous, self-sufficient words.

"I have no literary interests," Kafka reminds Felice, "but am made of literature. I am nothing else, and cannot be anything else" (p. 304). And if he is made of literature, then Felice Bauer (like his father) is made of life. These letters are "all about you"—as his fiction is all about his father—but they too, like the fiction, are his "safety... a chance to breathe freely." Felice becomes, like Hermann Kafka, the necessary body of a writing that is designed to transcend it in the act of articulation.

Kafka does not conceal his intentions. In February 1913, having not seen Felice since their first hours together in August 1912, he suggests that the life of words, the daily and sometimes twice-daily letters, is where their love must reside: "To win you at close quarters, and for good, requires greater strength (*andere Kräfte*) than the play of muscles that drives my pen.... It does seem to me sometimes that this communication by letter, beyond which I have an almost constant longing for reality, is the only kind of communication in keeping with my wretchedness (my wretchedness which of course I do not always feel as wretchedness), and the transgression of this limit imposed on me would lead us both to disaster" (p. 197).

Trying to reconcile his love for Felice with his fear of her presence, Kafka evolves the special language of paradox that will combine them. It is a language of assertion and qualification, proposal and withdrawal, plea and the fear of acceptance. The words convey a love that trembles at the possibility of fulfillment. The condition of this expression of love is, from the view of custom and common language, one of hopeless contradiction; to the mind of Kafka it is the altered speech that embodies his dual intentions. Like Huizinga's characterization of the language of liturgy-as-play, the words are "pointless but significant."⁴

The letter of August 1, 1913 is typical: "So in spite of everything you want to take up the cross, Felice? Attempt the impossible?... I have not come to the end of my counterarguments, their list is endless; the impossibility is constantly proven. But you too reveal yourself as constant (though not, of course, since you are a human

⁴ *Homo Ludens, A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1950), p. 19. Huizinga is quoting from Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. See Erich Heller, *Franz Kafka* (New York: Viking Press, 1974), pp. 58-62, for a discussion of Kafka's "epistolary Eros."

being, as constant as the impossibility). I cannot resist a feeling of hope, and so I abandon all my counterarguments—though I must not conceal the fact that this is done in the conscious knowledge of it being a delusion" (p. 293). In the moment he takes her for his wife he declares the inevitable unhappiness of their marriage. And whatever he is doing to Felice Bauer and himself—the affair did not finally end until December of 1917—Kafka is transforming a language weighted with earthly love into a language in which each word means doubly, is enchained and then released to float in another sphere of reality.

In the context of their actual relationship and its eventual dissolution, this correspondence reads as Kafka's disguised flight from a woman who could release him from dependency on his family only by binding him to it through repetition of the marital act. As a piece of fiction, however, and as the forerunner of later fictions, especially *The Castle*, the letters are a union of the discursive and the textual, of propositional and literary language, of earth-bound lovers struggling to close the literal gap between Prague and Berlin, and imaginary lovers who thrive on the imaginary meetings of metaphor.

In his concern with the relationship of living and writing, Kafka reflects certain ideas that originate in German and English romanticism and come to full bloom in the French Symbolists: the idea of the artist as one who is necessarily separated from ordinary life; the idea of the literary object and literary language as straining to achieve a status beyond common experience and free from the referential function of language as it is normally used—Mallarmé's insistence that there be two languages, one for "vulgar or immediate" purposes, another for "essential purposes";⁵ the idea of the verbal image as potentially a holy object, a construct of words that yet invokes a reality beyond not only words but beyond ordinary human perception. Poetry begins, Valéry writes, with "the voice of the public, that collection of traditional and irrational terms and rules," yet transforms it into something else, a "strange discourse... a language within a language." The public language is to the poetic as walking is to dancing: the action directed to a definite end and the action that "goes nowhere."⁶

⁵ *Selected Prose Poems, Essays, and Letters*, trans. Bradford Cook (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), p. 43.

⁶ *The Art of Poetry*, trans. Denise Folliot (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1958), pp. 67, 64, 70.

For Frank Kermode the symbol is the "romantic image," a "radiant truth out of space and time" epitomized in Yeats's figure of the dancer—outside the mundane concerns of intention and utility, reconciling meaning and being. In its most telling form the image becomes icon, before which ordinary language is debased discourse: "What matters is the concrete, unique, symbolic object, the living, unified body. *Et tout le reste est littérature*. Upon this body we may press our lips; what we cannot do is to abstract a meaning from it, paraphrase it in terms of our familiar abstractions."⁷

Kermode's description, however, only makes obvious Kafka's distortion of that symbolic mode to which he is in part indebted. There are no golden birds in Kafka, no trees blossoming among school children. Kafka's symbolic images are invariably freakish—even monstrous. They have the traditional symbolic function of cutting through the thick complacency of the ordinary, yet they mock their own status as alien beings as well. We think of the bouncing celluloid balls in "Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor"; the strange animal, "half kitten, half lamb," in "A Crossbreed"; the walking star-shaped spool called Odradek in "The Cares of a Family Man"; or, inevitably, *das Ungeziefer*, who clings to the walls and ceilings rather than a golden bough. The romantic image, aloof from a world of dreary time-serving, now comes forth in violent deformity, part of that radical distortion of metaphor which Stanley Corngold has described.⁸ Unlike Yeats, Kafka arrives at his technique through Kleist's *The Marquise of O*, Michael Kohlhaas, and Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* rather than the English romantics and the French Symbolists. His symbols denigrate the power of common discourse, but they also expose the perverse dimensions of literary language.⁹

The divided strands of life and literature are the fabric of Kafka's fiction, but they become twisted there into new and startling shapes.

⁷ *Romantic Image* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 56. See also the discussion by Sigurd Burkhardt on the attempt of poetry "to release words in some measure from their bondage to meaning, their purely referential role, and to give or restore to them the corporeality which a true medium needs": *Shakespearean Meanings* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 24.

⁸ *The Commentators' Despair. The Interpretation of Kafka's Metamorphosis* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1973), pp. 5, 9, 29.

⁹ See the chapter "Beyond Allegory and Symbol" and the discussion of the role of "things" in Kafka in Wilhelm Emrich, *Franz Kafka, A Critical Study of his Writings* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1968), pp. 79-132. See also Adrian Jaffe, *The Process of Kafka's Trial* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967), pp. 31-35, on "Irrelevancy and Allegory."

A quest for transformation of the ordinary collides with a suspicion of the moral dubiousness of aestheticism, of language declaring its autonomy. In *The Metamorphosis* and *In the Penal Colony* we see a grotesque challenge both to the idea of the symbol freed from life and the idea of life insensitive to the symbol. In Kafka's later fiction, beginning with *The Trial*, these forces are increasingly interdependent. The oppressively mundane Bank and Village worlds of *The Trial* and *The Castle* become the only visible signs of powers beyond or beneath articulation. Living and writing, the languages of methodical procedure and transcendence, are indistinguishable.

II

The comic horror of *The Metamorphosis* (November-December, 1912) is the entrance into the world of ordinary life of an image. The transformation of Gregor Samsa into a vermin is the dramatization of a common simile being fleshed out into a literal presence. No longer "like" a vermin, Gregor Samsa *is* one, and thus moves from the status of a man whose conduct as son and employee is well-liked to that of a bug, to a new status that cannot be encompassed by any linguistic device.¹⁰ He has torn himself free from a referential system of language and stands before us (and his family), like all symbols, as the indictment of ordinary life and logic. To "interpret" Gregor-as-vermin, to see him as paraphraseable sign and thus to create humanly relevant abstractions behind him, is simply to refuse to accept the meaning of what has happened in the Samsa household. For this, as Corngold has written, is a "family drama... (of) the conflict between ordinary language and a being having the character of an indecipherable word."¹¹

The great comic effects of the story come from Gregor's and his family's early response to this transformation. Trying desperately to maneuver his new form around his bedroom, Gregor is still hoping to catch his train and keep his appointments. Meanwhile, his family and the chief clerk from the office are gathered at his locked

¹⁰ See Gunther Anders, *Franz Kafka*, trans. A. Steer and A. K. Thorlby (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1960), p. 43; and see Mark Splan, *Dickens and Kafka* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), pp. 87-93, for a discussion of the influence of Gogol's "The Nose" and Dostoevsky's *The Double* on the basic strategy of *The Metamorphosis*.

¹¹ *The Commentators' Despair*, p. 11. See also Corngold's discussion of *The Metamorphosis* as a critique of symbolism in the context of Paul de Man's distinctions between allegory and symbolism. (pp. 27-31).

bedroom door, exhorting and scolding him according to criteria which they cannot realize are no longer relevant: "this is not the season of the year for a business boom (*um besondere Geschäfte zu machen*), of course," the chief clerk says through the door, "we admit that, but a season of the year for doing no business at all, that does not exist Mr. Samsa, must not exist" (*The Complete Stories*, p. 97).

And yet this is the season that has come for Gregor Samsa: the season of no business at all. The conventions of community and representational prose on one side of Gregor's door and the impenetrable symbol on the other become in this story Kafka's version of the romantic tension. Trying to unlock his door by turning the key with his jaws, Gregor finally hears the lock click open: "With a deep breath of relief (*Aufatmend*) he said to himself: 'So I didn't need the locksmith'" (p. 100). And he cries to the chief clerk, now fleeing from the apartment, "'I'll put my clothes on at once, pack up my samples and start off'" (p. 101).

With the presence of such talk in the mouth of an upright bug steadying itself against the door, we witness both the trivialization of the real and the perversion of the symbol within its midst. The outcome, however, of this story is the eventual replenishment of ordinary life as the result of Gregor's transformation. The family gradually regains its lost bearings: the father once again contributes to the common welfare, the mother takes in sewing, the young daughter moves toward independence and sexual maturity. This second transformation comes at the expense of Gregor; it occurs only when his power as a symbol begins to wane.

The family begins to neglect Gregor. His sister no longer ponders over the right food for him but simply "pushed into his room with her foot any food that was available" (p. 125); the new char, as if oversized bugs were not the most trying obstacle in a cleaning woman's day, addresses him familiarly as "old dung beetle!" (p. 127). The lodgers who come to stay at the Samsa residence take calmly enough Gregor's sudden entrance into the living room while they are listening to Grete play the violin. In fact, "they were not at all agitated and apparently found Gregor more entertaining than the violin playing" (p. 131). Most crucial of all, Grete loses her belief (the extraordinary faith which the symbol has first aroused) that the vermin and Gregor are somehow the same: "You must just try to get rid of the idea that this is Gregor. The fact that we've believed it for

so long is the root of all our trouble. But how can it be Gregor? If this were Gregor, he would have realized long ago that human beings can't live with such a creature" (*daß ein Zusammenleben von Menschen mit einem solchen Tier nicht möglich ist*—p. 134). This is the banal conviction, gradually overcoming the original power of the transformation, that the symbol is in fact impossible. The beast and the man cannot possibly coexist in the same body: "*Aber wie kann es denn Gregor sein?*" And so the miraculous image is reduced to an uncomplex naturalism. The beast is a beast rather than a meeting-ground of sacred and profane spheres. Gregor crawls away to die, partly as his resumption of the role of family support—once again he is behaving "like a vermin," although now "with tenderness and love" (p. 135)—but most of all because he is simply no longer believed in.¹²

Ordinary life triumphs in *The Metamorphosis*. Threatened by an image that violates the substance and structure of family, work, and language, life regains its leverage. The father orders the lodgers from his house, the family prepares to move to new and more appropriate lodgings. They take a well-deserved holiday and, to complete those qualities that Kafka saw so prominently in his father's domain—the real world—they begin to observe the blooming sexuality of the young girl. Life, this strange story tells us, has a resilience beyond the powers of art. Literature enters into its midst as a grotesque symbolic object: meaning nothing, it confers meaning on a watching world, until at last that world, having drawn some unexplainable vitality from it, discards the object (and the special powers of vision it invokes) and moves on.

In the Penal Colony (October, 1914) brings together similar materials. "*Der Apparat*" designed to inflict a fatal punishment, the officer who explicates its use and purposes, and the body of an ignorant and largely innocent prisoner combine to make up the irrational and impenetrable element in the story. The explorer is the man who views the process from the perspective of western civilization, bringing to bear on his experience the valuations of reason. Predictably, he confronts the officer with the standards of due process: "He doesn't know the sentence that has been passed

¹² Dieter Hasselblatt, *Zauber und Logik, Eine Kafka-Studie* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1964), describes the reduction of the deformed Gregor from something shocking to his condition as "'stuff,' removed like trash from the domain of the everyday." Quoted and translated in Corngold, *The Commentators' Despair*, p. 132.

on him? ' ' (p. 145). As it turns out, the prisoner doesn't even know that he *has* been sentenced, and has had, consequently, no opportunity whatsoever for defense. The officer, of course, to whom such a question makes as much sense as the chief clerk's reminder to Gregor Samsa that a "season of the year for doing no business at all... does not exist," can only deplore its waywardness. The execution procedure is all, and it defies any notions of due process.

By means of a twelve-hour period within the apparatus, the prisoner is himself to become a symbol, climaxing the execution in a meeting of knower and known. His initial ignorance will become a knowledge so complete that he can be said truly to *be* his knowledge. To borrow the language of Yeats, who seeks a comparable but much less grotesque transformation in "Sailing to Byzantium," the prisoner's heart will be consumed away, along with a good deal of the blood. He will be gathered into the artifice of eternity, and become (as well as signify) "Enlightenment" (*Verstand*). The officer describes the process of this becoming in stunning detail. The precisely jabbing Harrow, the controlling Designer, the vibrating bed, the body of the prisoner without which the apparatus is mere machinery, lacking organic life—these will all come together to produce a single sentence: Honor Thy Superiors. There is thus no need to tell the prisoner of his crime or his sentence: "'He'll learn it on his body'" (p. 145). As in *The Metamorphosis*, Kafka has taken a metaphor and made it literal. "When an experience makes a 'deep impression,'" Anders writes, "then, according to a similar German expression, 'We come to know it with our own body.'" ¹⁸

By the sixth hour the prisoner, having lost both appetite and the ability to scream, will pass into the condition of symbol: "Enlightenment comes to the most dull-witted. It begins around the eyes. From there it radiates (*Von hier aus verbreitet es sich*). A moment (*Ein Anblick*) that might tempt one to get under the Harrow oneself. Nothing more happens than that the man begins to understand the inscription, he purses his mouth as if he were listening. You have seen how difficult it is to decipher the script with one's eyes; but our man deciphers it with his wounds" (p. 150). The word and the flesh are one. The completed symbol ridicules the ordinary understanding, even that of the officer—who can only, like a literary critic, marvel at and paraphrase a truth he cannot duplicate.

As in *The Metamorphosis*, this symbol deteriorates as the story

¹⁸ Franz Kafka, pp. 43-44.

progresses. Even during the pages of the officer's powerful description of the apparatus, we cannot help but notice the possible distortions of his interpretation: does a pursing of the lips denote the wisdom of Incarnation? Is the achieved vision of the prisoner his own or the assumption of the officer? There is more than indelicacy in the prisoner's vomiting all over the machine. Eventually the officer mounts the machine himself and the explorer witnesses the collapse of the apparatus: "the machine was obviously going to pieces; its silent working was a delusion... The Harrow was not writing, it was only jabbing, and the Bed was not turning the body over but only bringing it up quivering against the needles... This was not exquisite torture such as the officer desired, this was plain murder." (p. 165).¹⁴

The symbolic image of a wedding of flesh and spirit, stillness and vitality, becomes to the explorer's eyes an image of "plain murder" (*unmittelbarer Mord*). This no doubt is his view at the beginning, but—like ourselves—he has been swayed by the symbol into a fascination with the old regime, a disgust for the prisoner whose life he has defended, and an indifference to the progressivism of the New Commandant. Now the reality of the execution—nothing like the words with which the officer has described it—leaves the explorer in a kind of limbo. The symbol is both a compelling perversion and a mystification of plain murder; and ordinary life is both a sphere of reason and a mindless insensitivity to the extraordinary.

III

In *The Trial* (1914-1915) and *The Castle* (1922), Kafka departs more radically and with even greater originality from the symbolic mode, and begins to move toward possible resolution of the tensions of living and writing, of the common and the extraordinary. One major difference between these novels and *The Metamorphosis* and *In the Penal Colony* is the shift in status of the central image from concrete object to an invisible force that invests itself entirely in the language of interpretation.

The Court in *The Trial* stands in relation to the world of the Bank as the transformed Gregor Samsa stands in relation to his family and his salesman's job. In the world of the Court the power of ordinary

¹⁴The original German—"das war ja keine Folter, wie sie der Offizier erreichen wollte"—provides no basis for the word "exquisite."

language and logic is no longer operative. There is an arrest, but there is no charge; nor is there confinement. Unlike the vermin and the execution process, however, the Court is an idea that flouts image; it is known to us and to the people in the novel only through the interpretations that accumulate around it. The romantic image, implicitly scornful of paraphrase, disappears into the words of its earth-bound exegetes—the insignificant officials who know only “the lowest grades” (p. 10) of the Court behind them and K.’s chief advisors, Huld and Titorelli, who articulate procedures that do not so much lead to the Court as place one in a similar orbit. In these efforts language gives up its commitment to conventional signification in order to give voice to what is in effect a vacancy.

“The result on the whole,” the lawyer Huld tells K., “was therefore very gratifying, though one must not seek to draw any definite conclusions from that, since all preliminary negotiations began in the same way” (p. 155). Or “Progress had always been made, but the nature of the progress could never be divulged. The lawyer was always working away at the first plea, but it had never reached a conclusion, which at the next visit (*meistens*) turned out to be an advantage.”

The voice we hear is a comedy of non-sense, a parody of legal argument, Talmudic commentary, and bureaucratic haggling. It is ordinary language disturbed by a sense of Court reality into a language of paradox, a new literary language that approaches autonomy on the tide of its contradictions. Like Kafka’s letters to Felice, striving for independence of the courtship they supposedly serve, Huld’s dry, labored prose is wholly involved with Court proceedings, but is indifferent to the measurable results K., in his Bank orientation, expects to see. The essence of this language is captured in this statement that Huld makes to another of his clients, Block: “‘You were called for...and yet you’ve come at the wrong time.... You always come at the wrong time’” (p. 238). These contradictions comprise a doubled speech, a language that ostensibly observes a propositional logic even as it frees itself from the limits of logical meaning.

Virtually everyone in the novel besides Joseph K. seems to accept this speech as the inevitable expression of Court reality. More than this—and this is true of Joseph K. as well—they accept the notion that the distinction of life, a looming context that edges the ordinary world with purpose, is the Court.

Joseph K. is alone in the novel in that he brings to the world of the Court the mental style of the world of the Bank. This is his great internal division: that he has been seized by an extraordinary knowledge, yet clings desperately to the logic that violates, and is violated by, that knowledge. This knowledge is his "guilt"—his link to the Court, which, we are told, is drawn toward guilt (*von der Schuld angezogen*). We may also assume the reverse: guilt is drawn toward the Court. The reason for this attraction of a living man to an invisible sphere need only be the nameless sorrow of the inadequacy of the visible.

Joseph K. understands the sterility of the Bank and his previously well-ordered life, and thus moves toward the Court—yet he cannot escape the fear of what life may be when freed from the screen of his logic. That K. will never resolve this tension is apparent in the opening sentence of the novel: "Someone must have traduced Joseph K., for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning." K. assumes from the beginning, or rather the novel assumes on his behalf, that his arrest *must* have a cause. Similarly, he brings to his first interrogation a persistent belief in normal judicial procedure—although his very presence at the interrogation is a contradiction to that belief. He also clings to the idea of reference—that words and gestures must signify clearly things and attitudes beyond themselves. He assumes that visible phenomena—a man's face, someone "fidgiting on his chair" (p. 56), the arrangements of people in a room, all have meaning. He decides that the people on the Left and the people on the Right are two factions, and that he represents the former; that the motion of the Examining Magistrate in picking up a notebook "could only be a sign of deep humiliation" (p. 52); that the Magistrate has "just given one of you a secret sign" (p. 55); that the badges each man wears indicate they are all colleagues and that the former division into Right and Left is illusory. Finally he presumes the existence of a "great organization at work," and sums up its meaning: "*der Sinn dieser großen Organisation.*"

K. is a reader of signs, who cannot conceive of the opacity, the self-justifying integrity of the word or the image. Although once the Court breaks into his life he becomes utterly inconsistent in his behavior—it is his own mirroring of Court prose—he tries relentlessly to reduce the Court to consistency, to an allegorical system whose meaning is accessible to Bank intelligence.

His approach is opposed to that of the interpreters around him,

primarily Huld and Titorelli. Their interpretations are not attempts to read scenes and faces, to convert the wink of an eye or the movement of a finger into conceptual sense, but rather to re-create networks of procedure, to produce a motion somehow analogous to the existence of the Court. These accounts of procedure, with no visible reality before us by which to judge, are of a different order than K.'s readings. They are not susceptible to criteria of truth and falsity.

Despite his attraction to the Court, Joseph K. holds to a belief in a centered world that limits the freeplay of language, that determines the adequacy of language from a point outside it. Huld and Titorelli, however, speaking of the importance *and* the meaninglessness of the first plea or making fine distinctions between ostensible acquittal and indefinite postponement, posit a center existent only within the obscure arrangements of words they contrive. These words are not the designators of an external truth. They declare nothing but the body of their own being, the solidity of the verbal system that—in Valéry's terms—goes nowhere. Their interpretation is a simultaneous representation and distortion of the Court and that which is the foundation of the Court—the Law. Officialese—the language of Kafka's day-time world—becomes, under pressure of the Court, strange discourse. Alluding to an outside force, the language is referential, interpretative; but because that force has only a questionable existence, the language is also non-referential, self-sustaining, turning back on itself in the pride of its own precarious status.

Basic to this altered speech is the avoidance of an end, of a verdict that would establish external criteria—principles of adequacy—that would rob words of their freedom, of the "literariness" that draws Joseph K. toward the Court in the first place. Linked to Joseph K.'s pursuit of clarity is his commitment to ending, to a conventional idea of narrative that converts *Prozess* into *Produkt*. *The Trial*, unlike *The Castle*, is a novel that can end (although its middle is still fragmentary), because its protagonist believes in endings. He accepts the novelistic idea of the action thrown forward; he cannot keep his attention from the "main question, which was: how much actual work had been achieved in furthering the case" (*was er an tatsächlicher Arbeit für K.s Sache getan hatte*—p. 230)?

Titorelli has pointed out to him that while definite acquittal (possible only in a mythic past) brings everything to a close—"not only the charge but also the records of the case and even the

acquittal are destroyed"—ostensible acquittal keeps everything in process: "The whole dossier continues to circulate... swinging backward and forward with greater or smaller oscillations... These peregrinations (*Diese Wege*) are incalculable" (p. 198). Acquittal is followed by arrest, arrest by acquittal, etc. Indefinite postponement has similar consequences: "Both methods have this in common, that they prevent the accused from coming up for sentence" (p. 202).¹⁵

To commit himself to endless repetition—like Titorelli painting the same "heathscape" again and again—is as impossible for Joseph K. as a commitment to the style of interpretation of Huld and Titorelli. The trial, he decides, if it is to mean anything at all, must be a narrative; it must end, either in acquittal or conviction. A narrative paradigm is at the heart of Joseph K.; it is the structural equivalent of the clarity he craves, as repetition—a parody of linear movement—is equivalent to the duplicitous prose of his advisers. K.'s dilemma is that, even to save his life, he can neither give up the narrative paradigm nor simply forget the Court and its appeal beyond paradigm, and return to his original condition.

In the last chapter, K. is encouraged by the sight of Fräulein Bürstner to continue the walk to his death: "the only thing for me to go on doing is to keep my intelligence calm and analytical to the end." (*bis zum Ende den ruhig einteilenden Verstand behalten*—p. 232). He is more concerned with consistency than with survival: "Are people to say of me after I am gone that at the beginning of my case I wanted to finish it, and at the end of it I wanted to begin it again?" As if to be caught in a lapse of logic would be more than he could bear. At the end he thinks that "logic... cannot withstand a man who wants to go on living" (p. 286), and this is exactly the point. Joseph K. chooses not to live if he can have life only in repetition; he dies lest he survive to witness the death of logic.¹⁶

The Trial is the transitional work between *The Metamorphosis*, In

¹⁵ For a different, more critical view of what he calls "the compulsive style" of Titorelli, see Ronald Gray, *Franz Kafka* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 114, as well as his chapters on *The Castle* and the later stories.

¹⁶ For a much more affirmative view of the ending of *The Trial* see the recent study by Jurg Johannes Amann, *Das Symbol Kafka, Ein Studie über den Künstler* (Bern: Francke, 1974), who interprets the drive toward execution as K.'s insistence on joining personal and absolute law, free will and destiny, rather than a refusal of freedom.

the Penal Colony and *The Castle* and the later stories. Court and Bank, the metaphysical and the mundane, permeate each other. The Court, K. learns, has branch offices in every attic (p. 205): its bureaucratic operations and legalistic interpreters are consistent with the Bank world. The divisions in the novellas between the symbol and the voices of reason are here less distinct. Joseph K. voluntarily participates in—at times exemplifies—the Court's impenetrable procedures, even if he is also the one who questions them. His last act, however—not without his usual vacillation—is to choose an end rather than to continue the trial indefinitely. He can play this game of trials without verdicts, petitions without answers, signs without meanings, only up to a certain point. Ending confers on his experience at least an appearance of order—like a narrative that concludes only so that it should *be* a narrative and not something else.¹⁷

IV

The world of *The Castle* (1922) is a world thoroughly loosened from the pressure of narrative. Joseph K. tries to impose on his case. *The Castle* is fragmentary not only in that, like *The Trial*, it is unfinished; it is fragmentary in design. Plot is subsumed in interpretations—what Amalia calls “Castle gossip” (*Schlossgeschichte*—p. 265)—and these are endless: perpetual, unverifiable speculations on Castle significance within village events. The novel is not a linear progress culminating in K.'s confirmation or denial by the Castle, but a series of equivalent encounters—each one a potential revelation—whose meaning and adequacy are always in the process of being determined.

After over four hundred pages of events, nothing has changed. Frieda, her brief affair with K. over, is back in the tap room where he found her; Pepi, propelled into the tap room by Frieda's going off with K., returns to her position as chamber-maid; and K., despite a week packed with women, several changes of residence, various messages from the Castle, is no closer to the Castle than when he arrived. Yet K., weary as he is, is perfectly attuned to this world and is ready to begin again. With a resilience not unmixed with pathos, he recognizes the opportunity in beginnings. Like everyone else,

¹⁷ Walter Sokel, *Franz Kafka—Tragik und Ironie, Zur Struktur seiner Kunst* (Munich: Albert Langen, George Muller, 1964), sees *In the Penal Colony*, as the transitional work in Kafka's development, marking both a thematic shift (the refusal to justify punishment) and a stylistic shift (combining earlier expressionism with a type of allegory).

he believes in the Castle— an “illusory emptiness” (*die scheinbare Leere*—p. 3) that blossoms within and around every fact, every person, every word, tempting K. into a pattern of pursuit and abandonment: a continuing round of love followed by exploitation followed by indifference. He knows it will all happen again, that Frieda will attract him with the glow of her Castle connection, and that once she belongs to him, he will watch that glow die down: “I should be happy if she was to come back to me, but I should at once begin to neglect her all over again. This is how it is” (p. 401).

Since he accepts beginnings (he would not, like Joseph K., be ashamed to have it said that he “wanted to begin it again”), K.’s “quest” is hardly that at all. In fact, it is never quite clear what exactly K. *wants* from the Castle. Early in the novel he says, “I’m afraid, too, that the life in the Castle wouldn’t suit me. I like to be my own master” (*Ich will immer frei sein*—p. 9). Somewhat later he sees a choice before him, “whether he preferred to become a village worker with a distinctive but merely apparent connection with the Castle, or an ostensible village worker whose real occupation was determined through the medium of Barnabas” (*von den Nachrichten des Barnabas*—pp. 31-32). The convolution here suggests the hair-splitting of Huld and Titorelli: it is the language of *Castle-ese*, whose special virtue is to gild a single choice into plural possibilities. Clearly, all K. can *do* is to become a worker in the village; his choice lies in the perspective with which he chooses to regard that fact.

What K. wants, Richard Sheppard has said, is struggle itself, to fight towards, but never to reach the Castle.¹⁸ Another way of putting this is to say that K. wants the privilege (and the frustration) of freeplay—to live in the village, have a home, a wife, and a family, but to have all this “ostensibly”—to preserve the freedom of believing there is more.

“Still one would want more, one would need more,” writes Wallace Stevens in “The Poems of Our Climate.” This “more” is not transcendent heaven-centered surety, but a willed absence—a need to nourish and impoverish the real by supposing an inaccessible Castle beyond its edge. The play of Castle connections, waxing then growing dim, is the play of mind that blackens the borders of the visible with the power of what is not quite there. It makes Frieda desirable to K., then leads him to neglect her for Olga: “It was the nearness of Klammm that had

¹⁸ On *Kafka's Castle*, *A Study* (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1973), pp. 127-188.

made her so irrationally seductive; in that seduction (*Verlockung*) she had drawn K. to her, and now she was withering in his arms" (p. 179). This is the rhythm of the novel: pursuit, conquest, rejection, regret, pursuit... Despite his imagination turned upward to Castle heights, K.'s desires take him always more deeply into the real village life that is both bridge and barrier to the Castle.

In those moments "outside" the village, K. can enjoy the rare atmosphere of an exciting yet dubious freedom. Like the Castle bell that "threatened him with the fulfillment of his vague desire" (p. 21), freedom from the banal arrangements of the village may be indeed a victory, as in this passage at the end of *The Eighth Chapter*:

[It] seemed to K. as if at last those people had broken off all relations with him, and as if now in reality he were freer than he had ever been, and at liberty to wait here in this place, usually forbidden to him, as long as he desired, and had won a freedom such as hardly anybody else had ever succeeded in winning, and as if nobody could dare to touch him or drive him away, or even speak to him; but—this conviction was at least equally strong—as if at the same time there was nothing more senseless, nothing more hopeless, than this freedom, this waiting, this inviolability. (p. 139)

It is, in other words, a victory that only sends him back: to Frieda, to Olga and Barnabas, the two assistants, the two landladies, and "Castle gossip"—the language of the endless going-round.

The Castle, like death, sets these things significant. It exposes the remoteness from meaning of an image or a word or a village member; it empties out each thing by means of the distance from itself and yet refills that thing with the portentousness of possible revelation. It is far from the symbolic image of its counterparts in Kafka's earlier fiction—the vermin and the execution—for the Castle barely exists. It is pure context, a dark background on which our daily colors flash and fly.

The Castle is visible only in the fiction that village things are Castle-connected. In *The Trial* Kafka suggests that the Court is more widespread than first appears: "'You see, everything belongs to the Court,'" (p. 188), Titorelli tells Joseph K.; "'There are Law Court offices in almost every attic'" (p. 205). But in *The Castle* this connection becomes a major theme. To live, or even spend one night in the village, we are told early in the novel, is to be "'in a manner of speaking, in the Castle itself'" (p. 4). The most

trivial thing, a protocol "over which just now Momus was crumbling a roll dusted with salt" (*eine Salzbrezel*—p. 151), is still "a sort of connection perhaps with Klamm'" (p. 149). And of course it is the glimpse of Castle connection that elevates Barnabas or Frieda or Olga in the eyes of K. When that sense of connection fades, they decline into insignificance.

This potential and actual shifting in value is the cause of moral conflict, as, for example, when K. both wants Frieda for herself and her connection—"K. wanted to object, to urge her to go to Klamm, and began to fasten her disordered blouse, but he could not bring himself to speak, he was too happy to have Frieda in his arms, too troubled also in his happiness, for it seemed to him that in letting Frieda go he would lose all he had" (*wenn Frieda ihn verlasse, verlasse ihn alles, was er habe*—pp. 54-55). And yet when Frieda defiantly shouts to Klamm that she is with K., he instantly despairs over this possible loss of a link with the Castle. His conception of a love more valuable than anything he has becomes nothing more than "a whole night wallowing in puddles of beer" (p. 55). Within a few days, their relationship deteriorates drastically.

Out of these always tenuous connections comes the vast sense of contingency in *The Castle*, the possible untruth of everything we know. The universal doubt, however, has little of the sinister sense in *The Trial* of a cosmic joke at human expense. Rather it establishes a world of play in the novel. Everything is role, pretense; nothing is verified or verifiable and so every fact floats free, uninhibited by criteria of proof. Is K. the expected land-surveyor, or is that simply the vocation he dons in order to make his challenge to the Castle? Is there, for that matter, an expected land-surveyor at all, or is the title merely the agreed-on fiction which K. and the Castle use as a means for identifying each other? If K.'s so-called assistants belong to the Castle, where are his own? Has Frieda really been the mistress of Klamm? Pepi denies it. Is Barnabas a messenger? Has his family been ostracized or have they chosen to separate themselves from the village, in the hopes of more solid Castle connections than anyone has ever had? Barnabas' father seeks forgiveness, but he is given a strange answer: first he must prove his guilt! Finally, what of the Castle itself?—"if K. had not known that it was a castle he might have taken it for a little town"; not only that, but "a wretched-looking town, a huddle of village houses" (pp. 11-12).

Opened by the contingency of every fact, the world of *The Castle*

becomes a world of Castle gossip and play. Games and impersonations are played out with vigor—and frequently with good humor. K.'s encounter with the two men from the Castle who claim to be the assistants K. claims he has been waiting for, is typical:

"Who are you?" he asked looking from one to the other. "Your assistants," they answered. "It's your assistants," corroborated the landlord in a low voice. "What?" said K.; "are you my old assistants, whom I told to follow me and whom I am expecting?" They answered in the affirmative. "That's good," observed K. after a short pause; "I'm glad you've come. Well," he said after another pause; "you've come very late; you're very slack." "It was a long way to come," said one of them. "A long way?" repeated K.; "but I met you just now coming from the Castle." "Yes," said they without further explanation. "Where is the apparatus?" asked K. "We haven't any," said they. "The apparatus I gave you?" said K. "We haven't any," they reiterated. "Oh, you are fine fellows!" said K.; "do you know anything about surveying?" "No," said they. "But if you are my old assistants you must know something about it," said K. They made no reply. (p. 24)

The "surveyor" and his "assistants" reveal the dubious identity of all parties and yet tacitly agree to continue the game. Their language is pointless but significant, a doubled speech of problematic factual basis that still creates a provisional bond between K. and the two villagers both of whom he calls Arthur.

Some, like Frieda (and Felice?), grow weary of these games and the constant changes in status inherent to them. She tells K., "I shan't be able to stand this life here. If you want to keep me with you, we'll have to go away somewhere or other, to the south of France, or to Spain" (p. 180). Yet her imagination of what life there could be besides this one is nothing but death. "'I dream of a grave, deep and narrow, where we could clasp each other in our arms as with clamps'" (p. 182). But for K.—and this is a clear distinction between *The Castle* and Kafka's previous fiction—the life of posture and pretense, of centers that can only be provisional, of conventions that parade their partial dubiousness or irrelevance, is the life he will not give up—not even for admission to the Castle.

In the crucial interview between K. and the secretary Bürgel near the end of the novel, we have a scene (emptied of the horror)

comparable to the imagined scene of *In the Penal Colony* in which the prisoner will achieve oneness on the apparatus. K., trying to keep his appointment with Erlanger, accidentally walks into Bürgel's room, waking him up. Bürgel then proceeds to tell K. of the "rare possibility" (p. 343), "a perfect improbability" (p. 347) that can sometimes occur when people are trying to solidify their Castle connections. Someone may accidentally wake a secretary in the middle of the night and, in so doing, create a situation in which his plea will be granted. What Bürgel is describing, of course, is the exact situation in which K. presently finds himself. This too, like the prisoner who will learn his sentence on his flesh, is an achievement of momentary oneness: tale and experience are one; the word, unlike most in this novel, is being filled before our eyes. But nothing can come of this, for the simple reason that K. falls asleep—as must be implicit to the tale itself. "‘No, you don't need to apologize for being sleepy, why should you? One's physical energies last only to a certain limit. Who can help the fact that precisely this limit is significant in other ways too? No, nobody can help it. That is how the world itself corrects the deviations in its course and maintains the balance’" (*So korrigiert sich selbst die Welt in ihrem Lauf und behält das Gleichgewicht*—p. 351). The moment of possible incarnation, the meeting of the hero with his destiny, slips away in weariness rather than culminating in wisdom.

The faith of *The Castle* is that this scene is a paradigm for the entire novel, as if every scene and speculation were the potential meeting-ground of a character and his proper destiny. More than this, what is truly miraculous in the Bürgel interview is not the waking of K. to Enlightenment, even should it occur, but the fact that K. sleeps through it. "‘This is indeed an excellent, time and again unimaginably excellent arrangement, even if in other respects dismal and cheerless (*wenn auch in anderer Hinsicht trostlos*). . . . Go along now. Who knows what awaits you over there? Everything here is full of opportunities, after all. Only there are, of course, opportunities that are, in a manner of speaking, too great to be made use of, there are things that are wrecked on nothing but themselves. Yes, that is astonishing’" (p. 351).

This is the triumph of K. and the triumph of *The Castle*, affirming the freeplay of mind that Castle-izes the common village routine into a language of possibility. K. goes beyond his predecessor in *The Trial*, as he metamorphoses the condition of victim into that of

opportunist, the rejection by a vague, impenetrable authority into an invigorating freedom. The life of repetition rather than progress becomes for K. a perpetual recapturing of the same territory, a reading of stalemates into victories.¹⁹

The life of the village is where everything begins. This is where Castle desires articulate themselves in the varied forms of social encounter—the relationships between K. and Frieda or Barnabas or Olga or Pepi that are at once the scene of metaphysical search and the ordinary ground of the human world.

All the characters claim distinctions, Castle connections, which the facts cannot entirely support: Frieda claims intimacy with Klammm; Olga insists that the Castle has had a direct hand in the decline of her family; Pepi speculates that the whole purpose of the affair between K. and Frieda has been her own rise (p. 378) from chambermaid to barmaid. And these claims are matched by K.'s assertion that he is a land-surveyor by virtue of a summons from the Castle.

From these illusions emerges a union of the ordinary and the unique, a series of conventional social acts and individualistic assaults on Truth. The meetings of K. and the villagers are the provisional arenas of shared conventions, subverted by a higher Castle connection and enriched by it. When Pepi learns that she is to replace Frieda in the taproom, she "loved K. as she had never loved anyone before"—because he "had opened the way upstairs for her" (p. 377). Meeting in this novel is inseparable from exploitation—or imagination, that sees the loved one as both end and means, sufficient substance and ambiguously pointing sign.

In his last completed story, *Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk*, written in the spring of 1924, Kafka describes the singer whose song is nothing but the "piping" (*ein Pfeifen*) that all the mice do, "a characteristic expression of our life" (p. 361). But Josephine elects to stand apart, a parody of the isolated artist, in order to make "a ceremonial performance out of doing the usual thing." While the speaker of the story points out the presumptuousness of Josephine, he also admits that "here piping is set free from the fetters of daily life and it sets us free too for a little while" (p. 370). This

¹⁹ Anders interprets the idea of repetition in Kafka much more negatively than I do, seeing it as a condemnation "to a life of repeated failures" (p. 38). Closer to the spirit of Kafka's late works is Kierkegaard's small book *Repetition*, which, according to Emrich, Kafka had read by 1918. There he would have found the idea of a consciousness that recognizes that "life is a repetition, and that this is the beauty of life."

is the ceremony of the usual: ordinary, incessant piping is recognized as ritual, a thoroughly arbitrary ritual that yet discloses the art of piping.

Central to the satisfaction, however grudging at times, which both artist and audience derive from this singing that is the quintessence of the common is the shared convention of performance. As James Rolleston points out, "Josefine's 'art' is merely ordinary life detached from its context and turned into an object of contemplation by an act of mutual agreement between performer and public."²⁰ The result is an art that makes a litany of the common, restoring to the community the mystery of what it has always done: "It is a matter of nut-cracking, but it turns out that we have overlooked the art of cracking nuts because we were too skilled in it" (p. 362).

The piping of mice, the Castle gossip of villagers—they are Kafka's ordinary world "set free from the fetters of daily life" by "performance" of the common routine, by a vision of the plainly real as potential connection to a higher realm. From the separation of life and literature, the common and the profound, that underlies his earlier symbolism, Kafka moves to a reassessment and an affirmation of the ordinary—the unlikely bearer of all "the pure, the true, and the immutable" there can be. It is an ordinary turned back on itself, conscious at last of the possible emptiness that sets it free.²¹

²⁰ *Kafka's Narrative Theater* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1974), p. 132.

²¹ I am grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities for the award of a Summer Stipend which allowed me to begin work on this essay, and to Charles Altieri, Frank Jones, Eric Laguardia, and Lawrence Stone for advice and assistance while writing it.

Book Reviews

The Poetry of Chaucer by John Gardner. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977. Pp. xxxv + 408. \$15.00.

The Matter of Araby in Medieval England by Dorothee Metlitzki. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977. Pp. xiiv + 320 + maps and illustrations. \$15.00.

The Poetry of Chaucer was originally planned as the conclusion to Gardner's *Life and Times of Chaucer* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1976). When that scheme proved cumbersome he divided the project into two separate volumes. This book shares the liveliness of style evident in the first volume, along with a keen love of Chaucer. Gardner is an excellent reader of poetry. He has the craftsman's eye for structural detail and a novelist's sensitivity for what is humanly important in literary situations. He also has a fine sense of literary tradition, tinged somewhat by a romantic streak which encourages him to side with feeling and involvement. The principal virtue of this book is its responsiveness to Chaucer as a manipulator of words and an observer of people. At times it is unabashedly derivative of the host of fellow critics he consults; at other times it is unabashedly speculative. Occasionally it is dogmatic. But always he says what he feels, and often in a shrewd and penetrating way.

The division of the original project into two volumes did not entirely solve the structural problems of its argument, however. *The Poetry of Chaucer* remains a cumbersome book, mainly because it is several books which have not quite been sorted out or assimilated. In part it is a compendium of sensible discussions of Chaucer. Many a reader will be pleased to find his name there. One is amazed at the reach of Gardner's secondary reading—from vast numbers of critical articles to unpublished dissertations. But I found myself wishing that some of that material had been discussed in footnotes; it tends to obstruct a sharp focus on Gardner's own argument (for Gardner, perhaps, as well as his reader). The book does reveal a distinctive approach to Chaucer, however, or rather, two distinctive approaches, though they are not consistently or fully maintained. Most prominent, at least in the beginning chapters, is Gardner's relating of Chaucer's ideas and techniques to Neoplatonic traditions. Less prominent, but more troublesome, is his professed nominalistic approach to Chaucer. These diverse elements could be the book's great strength, but they end up its main deficiency—like asses and oxen (to borrow a metaphor from one of Gardner's favorite plays) which have not been trained to pull together. Although it seems likely that Chaucer does indeed make brilliant use of such apparently contradictory philosophies as Neoplatonism and nominalism, Gardner makes little effort to show how the two are made compatible in Chaucer. The clue doubtless lies in Boethius, of whom Gardner often makes good use, but the two strains of thought are left apart and tug against each other rather than pull in support of *The Poetry of Chaucer*. Moreover,

although Gardner supports his neoplatonic premises with quotations from late classical and patristic as well as medieval writers and relates this tradition to other writers even into the Renaissance, he does not provide supporting evidence for his assertions about nominalism. Indeed, here, where his argument could be most original and helpful, it is most shaky. Occasionally his insights into nominalistic thought penetrate to the heart of Chaucer's vision. But he uses the term much too loosely and apparently without much understanding of who the nominalist philosophers were or what they said. The reader is immediately put off by the assertion in his Introduction that "Ockham's view received powerful support later from Roger Bacon of Oxford" (p. xvii; cf. p. 156, where the error is repeated); Bacon was long dead before Ockham ever wrote a word. Bacon is the only "nominalist" philosopher Gardner specifically cites, which is in itself misleading in that Bacon might well be labelled "empiricist," but few would designate him "nominalist." Gardner's definition of nominalism as that idea "that nothing can be known" (p. 225) is wholly inadequate and reflects the views of neither Bacon, Ockham, or whoever else is supposed to be a nominalistic philosopher of that day. Nor does it adequately reflect Chaucer's view.

There is much in the book, however, especially in its first five chapters, which is lively, challenging, and informative. The chapter on the *Book of the Duchess*, especially his discussion of Chaucer's use of repetition, association, and formal arrangement, is excellent. In all these early chapters Gardner's discussion of neoplatonic tradition rings true and sheds light on Chaucer's method. Even when one disagrees with a particular interpretation, he is likely to be stimulated and pleased at the broad and humane insights Gardner extracts from the poems. His observations on Chaucer's "technique of counterpoise" provide valuable recognition of one of Chaucer's most distinctive methods. His comments on *Anelida and Arcite* and the "Complaint of Mars" are among the best to be found on those poems. So too his observations on the narrator in the *Parlement of Fowles*—that clownish lover of knowledge who behaves like a "worried nominalist wringing his fingers and squinting in confusion" (p. 44). His chapter on *Troilus and Criseyde* is likewise often superb. His handling of the interconnected commitments of its people and the subtlety of their various betrayals is astute; especially notable are his insights into Criseyde's justifiable concern over public opinion and his kind treatment of Pandarus. His discussion achieves a poignant sense of the tragic and the beautiful which is exactly appropriate to the poem. One wonders how he can later call the *Knight's Tale* "by any standard, the best poem Chaucer ever wrote" (p. 241).

His argument that the *House of Fame* should be viewed as a poem more or less contemporaneous with *Troilus* will force readers to reconsider the order of Chaucer's canon. One must commend his treatment of Koonce's book, which puts that troublesome argument into a perspective which should make it useful to even the most skeptical readers. But his seeing the subject of the poem to be "man's total blindness, not the truth of revelation" (p. 155) seems to err to the other extreme and points us back to the weakness of his understanding of nominalism. Geoffrey sees a great deal in that poem and

understands much of what he sees. Some he does not understand, and some he refuses to commit himself on. He is blind to a degree, yes, but not totally blind. The distinction is important, else nominalism be equated with skepticism (which is false) and all questions of knowledge declared meaningless (which may be absurd and modern, but not medieval).

Were *The Poetry of Chaucer* to end with the chapter on the *House of Fame* it would probably receive more flattering reviews. The discussion of the *Canterbury Tales* is a great falling off. The quality of writing is more hasty, the depth of perception less probing. He begins by discovering a neoplatonic pattern in the first fragment, but the discussion does not cohere with his earlier discussions of Neoplatonism. (Before he was concerned with neoplatonic ideas of form; here he imposes on the fragment a semi-allegorical pattern based on the tripartite soul, which seems incongruous and adds little to the understanding of the poetry or of Chaucer's method). After Fragment I, he abandons that scheme; his discussion seems hurried, its author disengaged where before he had been impassioned.

There are some fine moments in the latter half of the book, however; e. g., the rather bold treatment of the Pardoner's homosexuality as seen through a fresh interpretation of Chaucer's puns, his treatment of the *Physician's Tale*, and the way he juxtaposes the *Prioress's Tale* with the *Shipman's*. On the other hand, his casual treatment of the *Tale of Melibee* and the *Parson's Tale* is disappointing. And too often his loose usage of the term "nominalism" becomes a substitute for analysis and seems distracting rather than helpful in getting at the contrarities and relativities of perception which had characterized his discussion of the earlier poems.

Yet despite these reservations I found the book to be an impressive accomplishment. Gardner's sense that the key to much of what goes on in Chaucer lies in a rare blend of Neoplatonism and nominalism is, it seems to me, basically true. There is, moreover, much gold to be had on virtually every page, which derives from the vitality of his love of Chaucer and his many years of teaching.

* * *

Professor Metlitzki divides her study into two parts: 1) Scientific and Philosophical Learning, and 2) The Literary Heritage. Both are carefully researched, lucid in presentation, fresh in interpretation, and sensitive to what will be of value to subsequent scholars, whether historians or men of letters. Part I traces the transmission of Arabic influences into the Latin world. The crusades are seen to have virtually no impact on cultural exchange. Instead, contact came through Jewish scholars and Mozarabs (Christians living in Muslim territory), especially in Sicily and Spain. I was impressed by Metlitzki's presentation of the unique role England played in the opening of Arab treasures to the West, through Norman contacts in Sicily, and in Spain, through Henry I, who brought Peter Alfonso to England, and later through Henry II and Queen Eleanor, with their ties to Laon and Castile, and later still through John of Gaunt and his Spanish claims.

Metlitzki offers individual chapters on Walcher of Malvern, Peter Alfonso, Adelard of Bath, Robert of Ketton, Daniel of Morley, Roger of Hereford,

Alfred the Englishman, Roger Bacon, and Michael Scot. I wish she had made greater effort to link these men and their eager efforts to ransack Arab learning with the growth at Oxford of empirical science in the following generation. Predictably enough, her discussion of scientific and philosophical exchange emphasizes the 10th to the early 13th centuries (Bacon is given short shrift), while her discussion of the literary heritage, with the exception of her excellent comments on "The Owl and the Nightengale," concerns the 14th century and later. It might have been valuable to have had a chapter tracing the scientific and philosophical impact of Arab thought into the 14th century when the third and fourth generation of scholars—men like John Pecham, Duns Scotus, William Ockham, Richard Fitzralph, Robert Holcot, Walter Burleigh, and even John Wyclif—encounter the ideas and move beyond them. She does include one 14th century "scientist," Chaucer, in a discussion which offers useful information on his detailed knowledge of "Arabum Studia," particularly astronomy, medicine, and alchemy. She suggests that Chaucer's link with Arab culture might have come through John of Gaunt, and suggests that his trip to Spain in 1366 might have enabled him to gather material of the kind that went into his treatise (*not* translation) on the astrolabe. I find her speculation plausible. In fact, it *may be* that Chaucer had been involved with study at Oxford during the four or five years prior to 1366 and that his reasons for the trip to Spain were more academic than courtly, though under the auspices of the court.

Part I of *The Matter of Araby* offers abundant insights into scholarly activities in the High Middle Ages, such as the important role of learned men like Peter Alfonsse through their attachment to courts rather than universities, or like Daniel of Morley's abandoning dull and complacent Paris to seek out the lively masters at Toledo. Part II deals less with people to concentrate on literature and the propagandistic uses to which it was put. Initially Metlitzki discusses the influence of Arabic wisdom literature on that genre in the Latin world, works like "The Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers" and the "Secret of Secrets." In an excellent discussion of Alfonsse's "Disciplina Clericalis" she suggests narrative ties with such literature as the *Gesta Romanorum*, *Decameron*, *Confessio Amantis*, and the *Canterbury Tales*. Mainly, however, she studies the relationship of actual history to those romances which contain encounters with Saracens. There may be historical events behind King Horn's encounters with Saracens, she suggests, and offers Muslim accounts of raids and exploratory expeditions to England and Ireland as proof. She emphasizes that the West is dealt with more sensitively and with greater tolerance in Eastern literature than the East is in the propaganda of the West, which was the more threatened and thus more rigid in its response to the other culture.

This second part also discusses John Mandeville and takes issue with the assertions of Seymour and others that Mandeville never travelled outside the confines of Europe. She notes detailed information which differs from his alleged sources (Friar Odoric and Haiton) and which is accurate and contemporary with his own writing. She thinks he may have spent time in Egypt.

Altogether I found *The Matter of Araby* to be a remarkable accomplishment,

a book which pulls together difficult material from varied and obscure disciplines. Its mastery of German scholarship over the past hundred years is an impressive feat in itself, to say nothing of the great range of primary sources which are drawn upon. The literary considerations are deft (particularly the treatments of Chaucer's *Squire's Tale*, the "Land of Cockayne," and "Floris and Blanchefleur") and offer supplementary material to whatever kind of critical reading of the poems one might be pursuing.

RUSSELL A. PECK

University of Rochester

Time, Space, and Value: The Narrative Structure of the "New Arcadia," by Arthur K. Amos Jr. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1977. Pp. 203. \$11.50.

Elizabethan Erotic Narratives: Irony and Pathos in the Ovidian Poetry of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Their Contemporaries by William Keach. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1977. Pp. 277. \$16.00.

Arthur Amos assumes, as do most people today, that Sidney's *Old Arcadia* and the incomplete *New Arcadia* are discrete works, each to be taken on its own terms. Thus, though he often refers back to the *Old* for instructive parallels or contrasts, his interest lies in the *New* as a self-standing fiction. He thinks Sidney knew what he was doing and where he was going throughout and that, whatever his reason for breaking off, it was not because he was bored, lost, or self-confounded. He argues that Sidney did indeed, as Greville maintained, turn the barren precepts of philosophy into pregnant images of life. The *New Arcadia* does so, Amos contends, by more complex and varied versions of the antithetical moral pageants so common in the *Old*. Sidney's aim in the *New* was broad-ranging and ambitious, not simply the *Old*'s stage-play of love, but a reasoned balancing of the conflicting claims of, as Amos calls them, "Eros and Civilization."

Previous critics have neglected the "overriding structural principle" of the *New*. They have simply assumed that it was an expanded and incomplete version of the *Old*'s Terentian five-act structure. Amos sees a very different structure:

A careful examination...reveals that each of the three books of the *New Arcadia* has its own ordering principle; these are, respectively, the dyadic relationships of space (here, there, in front of), time (then or now, before or after), and value (better or worse). These relationships are, of course, central ways of organizing experience and each of the three books tend to emphasize one of the three relationships.

This is the thesis Amos's "careful examination" attempts to sustain. The arguments which support it are detailed, sensible, and fully acquainted with

the current critical conversation. I found them convincing. A case for the *New* as structurally independent of the *Old* has been long overdue and Amos supplies it. He makes some acute comments about how the narrator in the *New* differs from the external commentator of the *Old*, and about how, in specific spatial and temporal details, Sidney tries to balance comedy and seriousness; but his major originality lies in showing, for the first time, how different in structure the three books of the *New* really are from one another. *Arcadia* criticism has always been plagued by all that plot-summary that you must include. Amos handles this problem better than most of us have, and comes up with a readable, as well as an original and convincing, book.

William Keach takes on a much broader and a considerably more difficult task. He has tried, in his opening chapter, to isolate the central spirit and thematic concern of Ovid's poetry. He then applies this analysis to six Elizabethan texts, *Glacus and Scilla*, *Venus and Adonis*, *Hero and Leander*, Marston's *The Metamorphosis of Pignalion's Image*, Weever's *Faunus and Melliflora* and the anonymous-but-by-Beaumont *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*. With each of these texts, Professor Keach proves himself to be an informed, perceptive and judicious critic and literary historian, and in each case he makes an important contribution to our current understanding of Elizabethan Ovidianism.

The opening chapter discusses the Ovidian re-evaluation currently in progress and tries to synthesize from it a conception of Ovid's "urbane ambivalence" which will illuminate the Elizabethan Ovidians. Keach sees three basic strands in Ovid's poems, myth, erotic ambivalence, and stylistic virtuosity. He wants, following Charles Segal's lead, to remind us of the violence and cruelty that accompany the urbanity, the neglected "darker aspects" of Ovid's poetry. These intensify what he repeatedly calls Ovid's "ambivalence." Keach does not, however, make clear just what this ambivalence really is, and this failure constitutes the book's principal weakness. Both in the Ovid chapter and in the later analyses, he never really gets beyond the position Brooks Otis arrived at in the second edition of his *Ovid as an Epic Poet*. Yes, Ovid's seriousness is not Virgil's, I now see, but I don't quite see what kind of seriousness it really is. The "ambivalence" is often alluded to but never explained. Keach argues repeatedly, and convincingly, that the Elizabethan texts share this ambivalence, without really ever telling us what it is. That Ovidian nucleus of identity, sexuality and aggression remains unexamined. As a result, the book's arguments occasionally seem obvious or tautological:

My contention is that in going to Ovid's poetry with a new freedom and openness, the authors of epyllia were looking afresh at a poetic world which was often dark and disturbing as it was light and entertaining.

Or:

A close uncondescending look at these explorations may reveal for the modern reader, as perhaps it would have for the late Elizabethan reader, a rather surprising awareness of the contradictions as well as the comedy and excitement inherent in human sexual experience.

True enough, but not much help. When you argue that *Hero and Leander* is "a seriously perceptive as well as an entertaining poem about erotic experience," you come close to stating the problem rather than solving it.

But maybe this is wishing that Keach had written a book that he didn't want to write. He may have felt that to consider the identity-sexuality-aggression pattern of behavior in a theoretical way would have led him outside his central concern. This obviously was to show that the Ovidian seriousness does indeed inform a series of Elizabethan texts in a more than superficial way, and this he has succeeded in doing very well. The Douglas Bush/C.S. Lewis cluster of misunderstandings has been politely but firmly put into the attic.

The second half of the book argues "that the overtly satirical dimension of certain Ovidian poems written around the turn of the century represents an intensification of the tendency toward satire present in the epyllion all along." The analysis is no less learned or acute here in the first part, but the texts are not quite so engaging. In both parts of the book though, the arguments are developed in such rich detail that we will all find much to disagree with. I, for one, hope that not too many people think, as does Keach, that Shakespeare's Adonis is "remarkably beautiful and vibrantly alive." But in its broad outlines Keach's argument for a complex and self-conscious Elizabethan Ovidianism is certainly correct and every student of the period ought to read and ponder it.

RICHARD A. LANHAM

University of California, Los Angeles

Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England
by Patricia Meyer Spacks. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.
Pp. 342. \$15.00.

Patricia Meyer Spacks has a gift for writing about subjects whose time has come. She catches a wave of interest—*The Poetry of Vision, The Female Imagination*—while it is still on the rise. The present book is certainly a case in point. A growing scholarly attention to early autobiographies neatly complements a similar attention to the ways that early novelists conceived of character. Formally as well as psychologically the two genres have much in common, and the issue they jointly raise—how did eighteenth-century notions of the self, or of the shape of a life, differ from our own?—is currently attracting a good deal of interest from historians as well as literary critics. Someone was bound to consider the relations between the selves presented in autobiographies and the selves presented in novels. But Professor Spacks has gotten there first.

Imagining a Self casts a very wide net. It deals with many kinds of private or personal writings—not only formal memoirs but letters, diaries, journals—and many kinds of fiction, from Defoe to Fanny Burney. The method is strictly comparative. Each section pairs a novel with an autobiographical narrative that shares some elements of its structure or theme. *Robinson*

Crusoe and Cowper's *Memoir* represent the problems of spiritual autobiography, where God rather than man is supposed to have written the script; women novelists and autobiographers alike reveal the constraints that society forces on female identities; Gibbon's autobiographical fragments try to compress his memories into a rational structure, and *Tristram Shandy* "insists that life offers no coherent pattern to imitate"; Fanny Burney's novels explore the conflicts in her private self, her fear, anger, and fantasies, more deeply than her diaries do; *Pamela* and *An Apology for the Life of Mr Colley Cibber* both play self-consciously to an imagined audience; Boswell's *London Journal* ventilates, like *Tom Jones*, the perils of growing up; and *Boswell for the Defence*, like *Amelia*, dramatizes the onset of age, an "experience of time's diminishments." If these comparisons, as I summarize them, seem a bit arbitrary, they seem that way in the book as well. Pairings like these depend on wit more than logic. There is no objective necessity, for instance, for comparing the *London Journal* to *Tom Jones* rather than to *Rasselas* or *The Man of Feeling* (each of them closer to Boswell in time and in "sentiment"). Yet the comparative method does allow Professor Spacks to discuss a variety of critical issues without worrying too much about strict canons of evidence. She aims to open the subject, not to conclude it.

Nor does *Imagining a Self* accept the confinements of genre. Though Professor Spacks is well aware that fiction and autobiography imagine the self in different ways, she chooses instead to seek out their resemblances: forms of identity rather than distinctions among literary kinds. "Novelists and autobiographers necessarily depend upon artifice—shaping, inventing, selecting, omitting—to achieve their effects.... Autobiographers rely mainly on artifices of selection; novelists, on those of invention. But both communicate vital truths through falsifications." The advantage of this premise is that it alerts both author and reader to the fictions latent in autobiography. Every autobiographer contains a storyteller. By concentrating on the narrative techniques of memoirs, rather than their factual truth, Professor Spacks demonstrates something that a reader can easily forget: an autobiography is not the neutral record of a life, but the shaping of selected facts into a plot. Her analysis of such stories is often triumphant. The account of Gibbon's autobiography, for example, where each of the six distinct versions is treated as a coherent narrative with its own form, style, and theme, represents a brilliant *tour de force* of critical discrimination. Indeed, it is almost too triumphant. A scholar less committed to finding the "story" might object to the way that each fragment (or elsewhere, each portion of a diary or each gathering of letters) is regarded as an intrinsic whole, rather than some bits and pieces from a larger work in progress. But Professor Spacks does succeed, most of the time, in illuminating the moments where life is transformed by art.

Writing about novels as if they were autobiographies, unfortunately, seems far less convincing. "Does the difference in their genres really matter? It can be argued that all fiction (and poetry and philosophy and painting) ultimately constitutes autobiography, the artist inventing, whatever the purported aim of his creation, only a series of metaphors for the self." Professor Spacks does not finally subscribe to this argument. She knows that *Tristram* and *Sterne*,

for all their similarities, wear different sets of spectacles; Sterne is an artist, he can see through Tristram and around him. Yet the perspective of *Imagining a Self* almost inevitably blurs the distinctions between the novelist and his creation. Pamela, rather than Richardson, emerges as the actor and manager of her story; and even Captain Booth is often discussed as though his psychological problems somehow continued to exist outside the fiction in which he plays a part. By subordinating novels to selves, Professor Spacks often seems to draw from the novels questions that they are not equipped to answer. "What are the parameters of private history?" "How are people formed by their histories and by their memories?" The replies, not surprisingly, are confused.

The worst result of the comparative method, however, is the tendentiousness, and frequently the woolliness, to which it leads. In order to compare a novel with an autobiography, their themes must be reduced to a level of generality where the life of the work quietly fades away. "Invention and judgment, the novelist tells us, are the stuff of genius. They are also the stuff of humanity. Everyone has them; everyone must use them.... The reader, the author, the hero: all are responsible to both faculties, and all must learn to respond properly, to create properly, and to act properly in the world; functions that are significantly analogous." Page after page of *Imagining a Self* drifts by in this style, manipulating terms—like "self" and "world"—that can apply equally well, or equally broadly, to fact or fiction. Abstractions tend to suffocate the individual perceptions. The book is hard to read; hard to argue with; hard to conclude. Here, in fact, is how it ends. "Selfhood and consistent identity, whether by sheer illusion-making or through collaboration with experienced actuality, is the underlying obsession and final achievement of the literary imagination in both of these related genres. It provides the ground on which the complex relationship of subjective vision and verifiable truth enacts itself." I do not disagree.

Or perhaps I do. The key phrase of the passage above, and of the book, is "consistent identity." The central problem of eighteenth-century selfhood, according to Professor Spacks, was defined by Hume, when he cast doubt on the notion of a "discernible, separate self." If identity cannot be taken for granted, if even introspection discovers nothing but inner chaos, then autobiographers and novelists must assume a fearful burden: proving that they exist. "Autobiography assures its author of his existence beyond all possibility of philosophic denial." Imagining the self becomes the last resort against skepticism, the one stable anchor in a fluid world. Thus eighteenth-century literature insists on continuity rather than change in character, on defending rather than exploring the self. Indeed, *Defending a Self* would be an accurate title for much of the book. Nor do those defenses hold against Professor Spacks' shrewd and resourceful probing; again and again she finds her author out, tracing a confident life-story back to its secret, vulnerable motives. Memoirs, even novels, are scars over wounds. Professor Spacks is wonderfully clever at picking those defenses apart.

In the eighteenth century, however, most autobiographers and novelists had a different interpretation of what they were trying to do. Few of them seem to doubt their selves. Even Hume, as Professor Spacks points out, writes the

history of his life quite cheerfully, as though his identity were a simple matter of fact. What fascinates him, in practice, is the relation of his own individuality to the principles of human nature in general. And a similar interest informs most of the memoirs and fiction of the century. Even the most eccentric authors—Colley Cibber, or Laurence Sterne—tend to view their characters as representative or exemplary. The attempt to discover universal truths of psychology, reconstituting philosophy on the basis of an empirical study of the human mind, accounts for much of the thought of the age—and much of its interest in autobiographies and novels. Eighteenth-century authors seldom write about identity crises. They look into their own selves, instead, to learn what they share with the selves of other people. Mutual exploration, rather than personal defensiveness, tends to be where they start; or at least where they *think* they start. And a book that took the notion of general human nature seriously would have to be built on premises very different from those of *Imagining a Self*.

Nevertheless, Professor Spacks deserves credit for opening up a subject. She synthesizes a great deal of modern scholarship, and contributes her own fresh and intelligent ideas. This book is not the last word, but it does make a brave beginning. There will be more to come.

LAWRENCE LIPKING

Princeton University

Transformations of Romanticism in Yeats, Eliot, and Stevens by George Bornstein.

Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976. Pp. xiii + 263. \$15.00.

The Limits of Imagination: Wordsworth, Yeats, and Stevens by Helen Regueiro.

Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976. Pp. 222. \$10.00.

Mallarmé once imagined a *Grand Œuvre* whose composition would be the endeavor not of one poet but of many. The reality of such a work would thus be complex. It would lie in its making rather than in anyone's authorization or possession of it. It would have the Platonic inconvenience of being inaccessible except in its innumerable and perhaps unrecognizable variants. Perhaps it would exist only as so many synecdoches: a Great Book of Parts. Or, to borrow from Wallace Stevens, it would be Supreme without being Complete, because change would be an essential part of its abstract. Others (Derrida surely) would make a point of concluding from this incompleteness that there is no such thing as a *Grand Œuvre*, only figurations and embellishments proceeding on a scale unimaginably vast.

A symbolist rhetor might have occasion to imagine comparable works, such as a *Grand Œuvre de Critique* produced by a complicity of commentators. The shadow of such a work seems to fall at any rate across the pages of these studies by George Bornstein and Helen Regueiro: their books are variants both of one another and of a memorable corpus of critical writings whose major keynote I take to be Robert Langbaum's *The Poetry of Experience* (1957), in

which the study of the dramatic monologue provided at the same time the first truly rigorous argument for describing 19th and 20th-century literary tradition as "Romanticist." This specific theme of historical continuity has become for criticism a regulative and even authorizing idea—"authorizing," in the sense in which Bornstein, for example, authorizes his book by urging "a reappraisal of modernist poetry from a viewpoint recognizing the centrality of romanticism" (p. 15). Few perhaps need to be urged, although many critics discriminate more sharply than Bornstein does among British, Irish, and American "romanticisms," and others (Hugh Kenner, for example) are inclined to think of romanticism as an early 19th-century interlude in what is essentially still a 17th-century turn of events. But Bornstein's point is that we have not yet straightened the "warping" of literary history that resulted from the anti-romantic bias of so many early 20th-century writers. The effort of "revisionists" (p. 20)—Frye, Langbaum, Kermode, Bloom—has not been sufficient to correct a more generalized failure (or deliberate refusal) to affirm "the latent romanticism within modern poetry" (p. 15).

A deeper point might be that literary history is a warping: what is literary about literary history is the turning of events this way and that, the making and unmaking of connections, in an effort to secure an intelligibility that is not immediately forthcoming. In this respect it is interesting that the anti-romanticism of the New Critics required them to reject the notion of historical continuity (some would say: to reject the notion of history altogether): this rejection made possible their self-definition, which coincided with their definition of the modernness of modern poetry, and which in turn was sometimes a definition of the kind of poetry they were themselves trying to write or at least to publicize. "Modern" in this context was often understood accordingly to an oddly contradictory (and arguably romantic) model, one that privileged, simultaneously, revolution and tradition. "Modern" is that which breaks with or casts aside the immediate or received past in order to recover a past (or to achieve a future) that is both mediate and mediating—removed if not remote or imaginary, yet rich in those conditions of thought, feeling, and language that are said to make the writing of poetry possible. "Modern" is therefore that which is discontinuous, yet not adventitious: it is a habit of mind that discredits or discards what has been received in order to construct a version of what has been (or is thought to have been) lost or destroyed, forgotten or abandoned, or which abides somewhere within a system of eternal recurrences, or perhaps within a linear system that must draw its energy from human and rebellious interventions. Among the New Critics, nothing could be more abominable than a received idea. Regularly, that which was received was said to be "romantic"; in utterly disreputable cases it was "Victorian"—a term that even at this date is sometimes used to refer to *decaying* romanticism. That this way of speaking is polemical, not historical, has always been argued by certain academic scholars (Birnbaum, for example). A polemic is a way of *making* literary history, not interpreting it, which is the way we are now inclined to interpret Irving Babbitt, T. E. Hulme, or Yvor Winters. The irony is that this repudiation of romanticism could hardly have been more romantic, which is a point that began to be remarked by those academic critics of the late '40s and the 1950s who undertook to read romantic writing not only

closely but, let us say, scripturally. This reading produced a kind of highbrow "rehabilitation" of romantic writing, but it did more: it tended to romanticize the reading of literature—and, as it happened, to romanticize as well our view of literary history—for it made possible certain reverberating moments of critical self-discovery, as when Northrop Frye encountered William Blake, or when Harold Bloom encountered Shelley and the Visionary Company. These were events that duplicated in strange and surprising ways Yeats's encounter with Blake and Shelley more than half a century earlier, an encounter in which Yeats self-consciously (and perhaps in warping fashion) romanticized himself.

It was the morphology of such encounters, with their secret or subtle (or perhaps not so subtle) exchanges of identity, that Langbaum began to study in the 1950s, largely as part of an argument that there are sound critical, generic, and philosophical reasons for describing as "Romanticist" the habit of mind that one assumes in order to construct for oneself a tradition out of the debris left by history—or, more accurately, by a history regulated by enlightened principles, or by the privileging of "methods" of skeptical or agnostic thinking, rather than by the traditional rhetorical ethos of preservation and transmission. The romantic turn of mind and history occurs when the ideal of the copious mind gives way to mythologies of imagination, and when the library is discarded in the name of individual experience. Romanticism in this view is the full flowering in the domain of artful discourse of a philosophical animosity toward received ideas (the staple of rhetorical culture); it is also a form of bricolage that is indeterminately aesthetic and ethical, in the sense that the construction of "traditions" (that is, models, norms, doctrines, systems—both logical and visionary—beliefs, mythologies, "values") is carried on not only to make the writing of poetry possible but, more important, to make the living of human life intelligible, purposeful, beautiful—in short, poetic. To borrow a notion from Richard Lanham's superb study of the rhetorical habit of mind, *The Motives of Eloquence* (1976), the Philosopher is likely to be deadly serious about his beliefs, because he considers himself solely responsible for them; the Rhetorician is likely to be more playful, less obviously sincere, because his task is not to create beliefs but to rehearse them on behalf of other people. On this view, romanticism as a turn in literary history occurs when poets side with the philosophers against rhetoric. Modernism, for its part, is romantic by virtue of the distinctive operations of its spirit; or, somewhat to the same point, modernism is a variant of romantic or post-rhetorical thinking, which we may define as that period after which the concept of "creation" began to be used to describe the poetic act; or, again, "modernism" is a term that helps us to discriminate among the diverse romanticisms of post-rhetorical culture. There are other turns or variations that one would want to insert into this score, but the dominant motif would be this: in order to be a modern one needs to re-enact the drama of the first romantics: one needs to shed the rhetorical habit of mind and to strike out on one's own, as though on a quest from skepticism to commitment, or from one's origins to "something evermore about to be."

Perhaps it follows that in order to read (adequately) modern poetry, one must first perform a reading of the first romantics, who may mislead us on a great many points of doctrine or idea, but who are nevertheless the teachers of what we might call the "literacy" by which modern writing gets written and read. It

would be good to have a systematic description of the differences between rhetorical and romantic literacy. Such a description might help us to develop (at last) a real theory of character, perhaps one that turns upon the distinction one would have to draw between impersonation, which is a rhetorical art that every Renaissance schoolboy (including Shakespeare) was required to master, and possession, which is a psychological state whose poles are empathy (*Einfühlung*, or what Langbaum calls "the specifically romantic way of knowing") and madness. In romantic characterization, art tends to get subsumed in psychic play, so that the poet's frenzy shapes itself into an ability to speak in many voices. One thinks of the polyphony of *The Waste Land* (what was its original title?), in which all characters are said to be projections of one character. Eliot may have thought little of the "Egotistical Sublime," but the complex principle of characterization on which *The Waste Land* rests received its first coherent English formulation in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*: "So it will be the wish of every Poet to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes, nay, for short spaces of time, perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs..."

The books here under review are both highly literate in the romantic way; that is, romantic writing is made to serve as an interpretive and explanatory model for modern writing. Thus Bornstein begins his book with a detailed inventory of romantic features that provides him with a critical language for his study of Yeats, Eliot, and Stevens: (1) conceptions of creative sympathetic imaginations; (2) the privileging of the moment (of experience or intuition or whatever) as against duration; (3) a specific genre, "the greater Romantic lyric," whether visionary or meditative, with its distinctive pattern of mental action; (4) recourse to the "quest" as a generative or regulative metaphor; (5) polysemy; (6) the secularization of religious language; (7) the organization of images into systems that serve as secondary languages; (8) a distinctive "spatial projection of reality": "The metaphorical structure of Romantic poetry tends to move inside and downward instead of outside and upward, hence the creative world is deep within, and so is heaven or the place of the presence of God" (Frye); (9) "a second type of poetry of mind, a psychodrama in which the poem's contents become projections of psychic activity" (p. 13); (10) diverse theories of impersonality. This splendid structure enables Bornstein to map romantic features onto modern poetry—a strategy that only a positivist would fail to appreciate, and in any case the model of romanticism that Bornstein constructs operates heuristically rather than hypothetically. It is an agency of reading, not a "view" but a way of viewing that enables the critic to make sense both of texts and of poetic careers. It gives Bornstein a "sense" of romanticism as a stable and homogeneous array of aspects against which to mark differences rather than equivalences—"transformations," Bornstein calls them, which would remain invisible or unmarkable without some way of speaking that would limn them into view. Bornstein's romanticism is not unorthodox, but neither is it an orthodoxy; it is a construction designed to show us how differentiated are the romanticisms of three modern poets. Bornstein locates these differences both critically at the level of

individual poems and more generally at a level that he would perhaps define as literary history, as when he writes:

Stevens distinguished two types of romanticism, rejecting the pejorative and derivative for the positive and vital. He nearly identified romanticism with imagination and used that faculty both to defend poetry in the manner of Shelley and to grapple with reality itself in a new variation of a recurrent romantic struggle. He carried to their ultimate conclusion earlier displacements of religious patterns onto secular experience, and continued romantic organization of imagery and spatial projection of reality. Yet Stevens rightly insisted that his doctrines were his own. He introduced a radical provisionality into his work while reformulating and elevating notions of the violence and cyclicity of imagination. These deflections in aesthetic theory hint at the radical innovations in mental action that pervade his later poetry. (pp. 175-76)

Helen Regueiro is quite explicit about the romanticizing nature of her undertaking: "I have chosen to deal with Wordsworth, Yeats, and Stevens in terms of a criticism that retains the distinction between subject and object, self and world, imagination and reality" (p. 15). Like Bornstein, she understands romanticism in terms that define a certain kind of mental action, although she diverges sufficiently from Bornstein to make it useful to read his book in tandem with hers: "Wordsworth, Yeats, and Stevens," she says "ultimately assert the ontological primacy of reality against the human imagination, and their search for a poetic act that will suffice is equally a search for an act that will transport them beyond the intentional confines of their worlds, into the natural perspective from which they seem forever doomed to wander" (p. 42). On this view, to be conscious romantically is to be conscious of nature or the world not simply as a philosophical Other but as an extension and even complication of the mind's fabricating powers. "Fabricating" is the word to use in this connection, because romantic consciousness is instinct with a kind of guilt—a condition that is often and half-deceitfully concealed by those famous doctrines that assert the *creative* power of imagination (as against its merely rhetorical machinations, or mere fantasy). The romantic is accordingly he who affirms consciousness as being a thousand times more lovely than the earth on which we stand, yet who is repeatedly and characteristically tempted to rid himself of consciousness, thus to return to that moment before thought in which one abides in nature with a sense of being utterly at home, abroad in a landscape that is also a place—with a sense, in short, of being a creature, not a creator. This desire for a return contains an implicit but powerful devaluation of poetry, one that we may see enacted, Regueiro says, whenever "poetry begins to speak of its incapacity to reach the place of being, or to create even a threshold where the significant experience [of reality] may take place. If it does take place, the experience seems more a revelation than a deliberate creation. The poetic act reaches out, but it cannot reach. It speaks of an experience, but the experience is almost always virtual. Between silence and speech, poetry enacts the tragedy of the conscious self" (p. 190). Well, "tragedy" is perhaps too inflated, but Regueiro's theme is otherwise superbly pursued, as when she shows how painful a loss it is when imagination

deprives Wordsworth of his feeling for the worldliness of things, or when she writes, in connection with Yeats:

Resurrection is not *beyond* history, but *within* it. The poet creates no longer a changeless world which like the boxes of make-up gives what is dead the appearance of life, but creates out of the material of history—the marble of a broken sepulchre or “any rich, dark nothing.” Imaginative redemption is associated not with the completed and timeless form but with the pieces of marble that come from the broken form, from the sepulchre which, broken, leads to life. The poet does not create out of nothing, or out of his imagination’s need to escape time, but “disinters” what is there..., the verb suggesting both an imaginative resurrection and a reaffirmation of the imagination’s involvement with the temporal world. (p. 135).

One reads Bornstein’s book respectfully, for it is a carefully made, well-conceived and in all respects professional piece of work; but one reads Regueiro’s with delight, for care has been taken not only to compose a study but to compel an audience, that is, to engage the audience in the industry of the critic’s text. Regueiro, like Bornstein, is a romantic and romanticizing critic, but she has not lost the grace of rhetoric.

GERALD L. BRUNS

University of Iowa

The Adventurous Muse: the Poetics of American Fiction 1789-1900 by William C. Spengemann. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1977. Pp. ix + 290. \$15.00.

This book is a reassessment of eighteenth and nineteenth-century American fiction, based on the thesis that its development—and its distinctively American qualities—derive from the discovery and exploration literature that formed the body of New World writing after 1500. Since this thesis is complex and sophisticated, in fairness to the book it is necessary to summarize it at some length.

The discovery of America, the author argues, changed the way Western culture saw the world, shifting the point of view from “the place to which America was gradually being added (*Europe*)...to the place being discovered.” Most important for literature, the picture changed from that of a “world that was growing quantitatively...to a world that was changing qualitatively with each deeper penetration into *terra incognita*.”

This constant interplay, over three hundred years, of travel and literature reached its fullest expression in the Age of Romanticism. Since a major component of the Romantic mind was its acceptance of change, the New World explorations that were constantly altering the globe created a situation with which Romanticism was uniquely equipped to deal. In an era of expanding geography, where maps did not represent reality and space modified truth by the moment, the Romantics believed that reality, insofar as it could

ever be located, could only lie in themselves. Out of the tensions produced by the conflict between a mobile New World frontier and a fixed Old World map came two very different fictional modes.

One of these was a "poetics of adventure," invented by American travel writers to portray "the metamorphosing world that appears to someone who stands on the moving frontier." This world seemed no longer a controlled, definable entity, but rather an unfolding, continually moving pattern. No longer confined by a map, it seemed a succession of scenes, reported by the explorer and existing in special relationship to him. In a sense, as each writer discovered the world anew, his responses recreated it, time after time. This poetic movement (Cooper, Brackenridge, Brown) contained what one might call "American" or "New World" values and attitudes—progression, curiosity, individualism, rebellion. The other, a poetics of domesticity, was "devised by highly influential British novelists" (Fielding, Richardson, Defoe) to "restrain and discredit this potentially subversive vision of reality." Here the stress was placed on "social and familial values," stability, continuity, conformity, compromise, acceptance—representing "Old World" or "European" reactions to the disturbing effects of the discovery of America and its implications. Thus, the aim of this study is "to describe the effect of these complex interrelations among New World travel-writing, European literature, and Romantic aesthetics on the development of American fiction."

This, then, is the theoretical basis for the author's critical analysis of American fiction which, he feels, developed to maturity in the nineteenth century through the dialectic exchange of these two versions of fictive reality. Viewed from this position, the novel in the New World embodies both of these antagonisms, which compete and combine to produce a distinctively American literary tradition. The poetics of adventure took early form in the non-fictional literature of discovery, from Columbus' letters to Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast*. By emphasizing the validity of individual experience over collective knowledge, the literature of adventure strongly influenced the methods of expressing that experience. Co-existent with it was the literature of domesticity, imported from England in *Robinson Crusoe*, *Tom Jones*, and *Clarissa*, in which authority triumphed over individuality and tradition over change.

The conflict between these two attitudes, however, evoked puzzling questions. The Romantic adventurer, in repudiating the domestic ideal, was likely to find that the adventure finally played out, that his voyage was circular, that the return home was inevitable. The conflict between the domestic picture of reality as a "knowable, absolute moral form which precedes and governs all human action;" and the Romantic's adventurous picture of reality as something which followed and emerged out of human action, created for the writer an insoluble moral and artistic problem. Foreshadowed in its earlier appearances by such works as *The Algerine Captive* and *Arthur Gordon Pym*, the problem became the major theme of Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, and James. The greater portion of this study—four chapters of seven—is given over to extensive analyses of *Typee*, *Moby Dick*, *Roughing It*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *The Connecticut Yankee*, *The American*, and *The Ambassadors*, from the point of view of the book's central thesis.

It is a reviewer's cliché, of course, to say that a book "throws new light" on something. Actually, this one does. Its central thesis is brilliantly conceived and believably argued, supported by closely reasoned exposition and an amazingly wide range of reference, from St. Augustine to Marco Polo to William Hill Brown to Norman Mailer. One begins it with a certain skepticism. What can possibly be said that is new, provocative, and revealing about Ahab, or Huck Finn, or Christopher Newman, those subjects of a hundred books and a thousand articles? The first two chapters convince the reader that in the next five it is going to be said, nor is he disappointed. Too, the pattern as established by this study immediately suggests others. How does the concept of double poetics apply to the history of American verse? What happens in American fiction *after* James? Are there other non-literary cultural ramifications implicit in this historic interplay of European and American attitudes toward the artist's vision of reality? The book itself is an exploration, an adventurous kind of scholarship we can always use more of.

RUSSEL B. NYE

Michigan State University

The New England Girl: Cultural Ideals in Hawthorne, Stowe, Howells and James by Paul John Eakin. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976. Pp. 252. \$11.00.

Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century by Barbara Welter. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976. Pp. 230. \$12.00 cloth; \$4.50 paper.

"Time is male," wrote Adrienne Rich in "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-law," and for those of us brought up on Henry Nash Smith, R. W. B. Lewis and Leslie Fiedler, it ought to come as welcome news that writers of two new books on women see if not Time, at least America in the nineteenth-century as female. These two books are an interesting contrast: the first, *The New England Girl: Cultural Ideals in Stowe, Hawthorne, Howells and James*, by Paul John Eakin, concerns itself with women only "as an all-purpose symbol of the ideals of the culture," while Barbara Welter's *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* is about the "real" American woman, not only the woman behind those heroines in novels, but from other layers of American life as well. These two books make clear how the balance has swung from woman as representative of society, preserver of its patterns, to a new symbol for the alienation of humankind.

Eakin, in this solid and beautifully-made book, is a cultural critic: he is interested in delineating the New England mind—not in proving whether or not there *was* such a thing, for the belief of Hawthorne and his contemporaries makes it incontestably factual, and not in the "woman question," which is only "tangential" to his investigation—but rather in the all-purpose symbol of the ideals of this culture, woman, the "official repository of its acknowledged

moral code, and... accordingly,... a redemptive figure in the fiction of the era." Eakin establishes, hopefully once and for all, the validity of the novel as history and of the literary critic as historian, arguing that Hawthorne, for example, creates from the "heaped-up rubbish" of the Custom-House attic a representative consciousness of a particular place and time in Hester Prynne at least as well as Perry Miller, Oscar Handlin, Richard Hofstadter capture the life of the past in such typical characters as the puritan, the immigrant, the reformer.

Eakin begins with Daisy Miller, whose "audacious innocence" has come to seem a particularly American enigma and her very "flatness" to stand for the blankness of the American scene. An ideal *symbol*, then, she holds out to a rootless young man the redemptive possibility of an entry into American reality. For James, Eakin argues, the familiar nineteenth-century love story of Stowe and Hawthorne had become a "fable of the expatriate American artist and his ambivalent desire for the native American materials from which he hoped to create a truly national literature." More than a marriage of convenience between a popular commercial formula and a deep-seated professional dilemma, it "not only proposed reassuringly that America was meetable and loveable, but it reflected as well James's conviction that American womanhood was somehow supremely the representative national fact." Yet Daisy also stands squarely for James's own ambivalence toward the American girl and toward America itself: if she was the supremely representative national fact, her "pure poetry" was balanced by the possibility that she might deserve to be assigned to "a vulgar place among the categories of disorder"; the other face of love for America, for all that was "pretty and undefended and natural" was a very real hostility. Moreover, Daisy dies; the expatriated American hero is not redeemed, and thus she balances exactly at the end of one tradition, renunciation, and at the beginning of another, self-culture, a progression which will end in the atrophy of this fable of redemption.

The theme of renunciation is traced, briefly, in the novels of Harriet Beecher Stowe, especially in *The Minister's Wooing*, where Stowe (whose father, Lyman Beecher, was the foremost Calvinist preacher of his day, and whose sister, Catharine Beecher, wrote a book describing home life as "profession"); tried to balance the two concerns of the solitude, suffering and renunciation that were a part of her Calvinist heritage and the redemptive possibilities of a woman's love, or marriage and family life as a reward for life's tearful trials. She managed to tell the truth about both traditions, according to Eakin, at the price of a certain falseness in her narrative—which is in fact two narratives. Stowe's is the world of a dying past; her characters are fixed in primordial family roles, and their arrested developments suggest latent sterility—from which heroes as well as heroines would later flee—but which meanwhile stood for the selfless devotion to a sublime ideal of renunciation in the persons of such heroines as Mary Scudder.

The link between this ideal and that of self-culture—the constant in the New England mind, as traced by Perry Miller in his essay "From Edwards to Emerson"—was "a piety, a religious passion, the sense of an inward communication and of the divine symbolism of nature." In Margaret Fuller, Miller had written, "daughter as she was of Puritan New England, we have

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virtually the only candidate... for the role of Romantic heroine...." And so Fuller becomes for Eakin the representative fiction of her time, embodied especially in the novels of Hawthorne and Henry James.

The point that Eakin makes about Margaret Fuller, and perceives as a characteristic of the American heroine from Zenobia to Olive Chancellor—that the individual seeker seems inevitably to become involved in an experience which threatens his or her spiritual freedom with psychological or sexual domination—is one of the most interesting insights in the book, especially as it applies to Isabel Archer. For example, he argues that the Blithedale experiment, as understood by Coverdale and Hawthorne, means that "the life of the mind is contingent upon the reality of character and personality, that it reflects the peculiarities of the psychological, and especially the sexual make-up of each individual" (what Emerson called the "pernicious ambiguity" of self-culture). He points to the striking and recurrent attitudes of dominance and submission assumed by the major characters at moments of social crisis as a metaphor for a mind in the grips of an idea or passion. "Even as they pursue their dreams of freedom," he writes, "Hawthorne's seekers after self-culture enter into debilitating dependencies that seal their spiritual bondage." Eakin is right, I think, in seeing that Hawthorne discounted social reform (such as feminism, communism), believing rather that good and evil resided in the individual, that one must look to the human heart, not the social organism; and he is right, too, in the ambivalence he finds in Hawthorne's journals and letters towards Margaret Fuller as a *personality*; but strangely, he concludes that Hawthorne offered in Zenobia "a more balanced, reasoned, coherent version of her as a *representative figure* of the transcendentalist movement." It seems to me that Hawthorne's attitude toward his heroines can *only* be called ambiguous. This "pernicious ambiguity," their passion, which threatens to undermine their own self-seeking, is at the same time an emblem for that individualism which is a threat to the social system: Zenobia's (like Hester's) lawless individualism, the feminism she espouses, is politically dangerous; we have seen in *The Scarlet Letter* that Hawthorne is exactly divided between attraction for his passionate and individualistic heroine and concern for the community in which the Dimmesdales do live and serve. If Hester is condemned to alienation, Zenobia must die. But in *The Marble Faun*, as Eakin points out, the redemptive role is given to Miriam, the counterpart of Hester and Zenobia, surely an indication not of Hawthorne's growth, for his most profound characterization is Hester Prynne (Henry James notwithstanding), but of his ambiguity toward his dark heroine. I would maintain that this is precisely Hawthorne's ambiguity towards himself as an artist in a society which defined "masculine" as commercial (*viz.* "The Custom-House"). This is a point that Eakin moves toward in his discussion of *Daisy Miller*, but does not reach. Moreover, he writes of James in his introduction that "if an artist were endowed with a characteristically 'female' personality..., one could read his affinity for the women in his fiction as a form of self-projection." But this interesting idea is never developed further.

Eakin has a very good chapter on Howells, where he describes the growth of the heroine from "an ideal figure, offering to the hero and to a changing

community a source of strength, purpose, and permanence in a period of social upheaval" in *The Lady of the Aroostock* to "the principal impediment to the hero's moral development in *April Hopes*. Tracing her through such novels as *The Undiscovered Country*, *Dr. Breen's Practice* and *A Modern Instance*, we find that the heroine as savior has been supplanted by the heroine as victim. But he offers his most intriguing readings in the chapters on James, especially in seeing in James's *Hawthorne* the key to the Master's meditations on America in his novels, and in his discussion of *The Portrait of a Lady* as James's most penetrating exploration of the New England consciousness and Isabel Archer as the American Scholar in pursuit of self-culture, dangerously unfamiliar with evil in the world, and thus a source of potentially tragic illusions. Two things stand out in this reading of Isabel Archer. One is Eakin's image of Isabel's "symbolic withdrawal from an unstructured world of reality into a theater of the inner life governed by a theory of her imagination," an image appropriate both to the roles women play and to James's own interest in the world, especially the inner world, as theater. The other is the ambivalence he catches in Isabel: her self-reliant determination which co-exists with "an untested capacity for self-surrender," explaining her reluctance to move beyond the world of theories into the uncertainty of a world of feeling. *The Portrait of a Lady*, Eakin believes, marks a turning point in James's exploration of the redemptive possibilities of American courtship; in *The Bostonians* James pursued his study of the idealism of the American girl to its logical conclusion: "the spontaneity and freedom of the pretty American girl . . . have been eclipsed; and the perverted transcendentalist idealism [of Olive Chancellor] . . . with her anguished consciousness and her broken ideals of friendship, self-culture, and renunciation, has been destroyed."

If Eakin finds the triumph of full-blown womanhood over perpetual virginity qualified by "the failure of the emancipated woman to find an accepted place in society through marriage," he fails to look beyond marriage (as does James with Isabel Archer) to see if there might be a place for her. As a matter of fact, as we know from Barbara Welter's *Dimity Convictions*, there was not. (The title comes from a poem by Emily Dickinson.) Welter finds in "The Cult of True Womanhood" (earlier an article, widely reprinted, and now the core of this book), that according to the women's magazines, gift annuals and religious literature of the period, women in the nineteenth century were brought up to be pious, pure, submissive and domestic. Welter sees such qualities not as redemptive, but demeaning, or at least severely limiting in real life. Actually, the New England girl was well aware that "money, social position, refinements in manner, accomplishments, and looks were marketable assets which gave her more or less leverage as a commodity."

Unfortunately, this interesting book—which really is staggering in its breadth of scope, from images of women in popular novels to writers of detective stories (Anna Katharine Green) to medical views of women to the feminization of American religion—is marred by awkwardness in tone, language, and style. It is not a book, for one thing, but a collection of essays only loosely, if at all, held together. The analysis is uneven, sometimes glib, sometimes sloppy. For example, although she uses the language of Puritanism, such as "state of grace,"

her discussion of Puritanism is so vague and the connection between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries so loose that we are left to wonder if conditions for women had not changed. The impact of eighteenth-century Rationalism and nineteenth-century Romanticism go undiscussed. In her analysis of women's roles in religious communities, she argues that the actual role of women there (which was conventional) was less important than the way in which the changed pattern of social life was *supposed* to bring true equality—but she does not tell us why. Or, even worse, she writes that "Women could legitimately claim that Mormonism recognized their importance more than any other religion because it tied them to their husbands for all time and eternity." She makes the interesting point that women achievers had special relationships with their fathers, but footnotes this idea to Robert Riegel and suggests that it needs qualifying (as it does, e.g. Hester Prynne, Isabel Archer, Ellen Olen-ska), and then states it as unqualified fact later in the book. She gives no evidence for her assertion that "the lower-class girl had more freedom than the upper-class young lady"—and so on and so on.

The worst chapter is the one on Margaret Fuller. It is chatty, not incisive; Welter never comes to grips with Fuller as an embodiment of the age of self-culture as does Eakin. "Margaret," as Welter calls her, wrote a "book of advice," a "tell-all book"—*Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. "It wasn't necessary to read it, but it was comforting to know it existed as rationale and reinforcement for doing what you were going to do anyway." We are irrelevantly told, in this chapter, about John Smith, Hector Crevecoeur and Benjamin Franklin, and also about Helena Blavatsky who produced a medical certificate proving she was *virgo intacta* fifty years later, but not about Emerson and Transcendentalism.

In fact, irrelevance seems to be a commonplace in this book. There are quotations from literary texts with no relevance to preceding or following sentences, such as Emily Dickenson's poem "I'm 'wife'"—which Welter cannot have understood given the context in which she cites it. The book is full of annoying quotations from other works: critics "who read but did not ask the reason why," "Margaret" assuring Emerson that "there were more things in life than were dreamt of in his philosophy," or finding herself, in Italy, "in the middle of the best of times, the worst of times." There is careless language—"grubby" detail, "pack up your things and immediately go home to mother to tell her about it,"—even misspellings (Elsie Vedder).

There are some good things in this book: the comparison of the Transcendentalists to the Bloomsbury group; the interesting contrast of the "pure" and "redemptive" girl in novels with those who in reality feared sex and death, often combined in childbirth; and the impressive bibliography of primary documents such as marriage manuals, gift books, diaries. But the book is marred for me by the careless way in which it is put together. It is, unfortunately, a "dimity conviction."

Miami University, Oxford, Ohio

JUDITH FRYER

Victorian Murderesses: A True History of Thirteen Respectable French and English Women Accused of Unspeakable Crimes by Mary S. Hartman.
New York: Schocken Books, 1977. Pp. x + 318. \$15.00.

This is not the first book to discover social history in the lives and trials of Victorian murderesses, but it is a noteworthy one. It has several distinctions: its expert prose style, its scholarly authority, and its perceptive analysis of the prevailing attitudes toward women's roles and domestic relations which are reflected in the deeds of thirteen lady killers, as Hartman felicitously calls them, and their public reception. A dozen celebrated cases are examined, seven French (one involving a mother-daughter team) and five English, all with casts of middle-class characters. The homicidal heroines were, in Hartman's estimation, "ordinary women who found extreme solutions to ordinary problems," the frustrations and anxieties generated by their ambiguous position in "respectable" society in an era when women's growing assertiveness and increased leverage within the family were slowly undermining their conventionally assigned position in society.

The cases—to be scrupulously fair, it must be noted that in several of them the grave accusations were never wholly substantiated—are arranged chronologically in pairs, the effect of which is to trace the several related changes that occurred in the feminine experience and consciousness in the course of half a century. Thus Marie Lafarge (1840) and Euphémie Lacoste (1844), who fed arsenic to their husbands, exemplified the Bovaryesque situation in which young French women of their day found themselves trapped, their fantasy life, stimulated by contemporary romantic fiction, shattered by their arranged marriages to dull husbands. The spirited Madeleine Smith and Angéline Lemoine, coming a little later (1857, 1859), chafed under the restraints of the prudential requirement that marriage be delayed until the right suitor came along; to occupy their time, they played "the waiting game of brides-to-be" not according to the rules but to satisfy their pressing sexual inclinations—with disastrous results. Célestine Doudet (1855), a well-educated proprietor of a Parisian day school, was tried for the death of a pupil, one of the five daughters of an English doctor who had put them under her governance to cure them of masturbation. Like Constance Kent, who confessed in 1865 that five years earlier, at the age of sixteen, she had murdered her tiny step-brother, she typified the redundant woman, a seriously disturbed personality for whom the structure and expectations of contemporary society provided no secure place.

With Florence Bravo (1876), who killed her well-to-do second husband after a liaison with the eminent hydropathic physician Dr. Gully, and Henriette Francey (1885), murderer of a local Don Juan who allegedly tried to rape her, the "new woman" begins to appear, revealing both in her own behavior and in the response of the public that judged her the heightening and "old values." By the 1880s feminism had advanced so far that the work of Gabrielle Fenayrou (1882), who conspired with her druggist husband to kill her lover, and Adelaide Bartlett (1885-86: the deed occurred on the

night between the two years), who somehow administered liquid chloroform to her grocer husband, could be interpreted as expressing woman's new determination to exert authority in marriage, especially by rejecting unwelcome physical relationships. Finally, the cases of Florence Maybrick (1889) and Claire Reymond (1892) demonstrated that the new freedom was in itself inadequate to extricate women from adulterous difficulties, so that in the end they too were obliged to resort to old remedies. Their trials for disposing of their husbands, who had been conducting extra-marital affairs of their own, dramatized the conflicts inherent in the decline of the double standard.

In the documents associated with these cases (Hartman has done a fine job of research) can be discovered a wealth of evidence implicitly throwing light on "the domestic confines of middle-class families and...the problems and even the terrors that women faced there." The Plutarchian method of pairing figures, in five of the six instances by different nationalities, enables Hartman to detect significant differences between the Englishwoman's situation and that of her equally troubled French sister; the latter, in her quest for identity and fulfillment regardless of her sex, was the more handicapped, living as she did in a bourgeois society that clung more tenaciously than did its English counterpart to convention (e. g. the necessity of a dowry) and the double standard. Hartman concludes, not unreasonably, that each of her purposeful women was at least as much a victim as a victimizer. But her interpretation of their respective situations is non-contentious. While obviously inspired by the women's lib. movement, the book is no shrill polemic against the tyranny of a male-dominated society but a reasoned attempt to "reveal the links of experience which bound the notorious women to their more obscure sisters."

The obvious retort here is that the very event which in each case was responsible for their notoriety severed that connection. Typical of their sex in their time as they may have been in other ways, the fact that these thirteen women sought an escape from their difficulties by the ultimate, irreversible step of murder places them at a considerable remove from their less decisive sisters. Hartman, however, invokes Durkheim's well-known hypothesis that the "deviant" person has significance "both as a focus for group feelings and as an indicator of prevailing social boundaries of attitudes and behavior." She avoids any implication that the deviance which led to homicide was the result of socially conditioned attitudes. The story she reads in her data, of feminine repression and confusion in the midst of changing social values and conventions, is not the whole story, otherwise the bills of mortality would have been laden with far more murders than they actually were. It is not recorded that Kate Dickens, George Eliot, Caroline Norton, Mary Ellen Meredith, Harriet Taylor, Effie Ruskin, and Elizabeth Siddal Rossetti, all of whom found themselves in situations more or less resembling those studied here, killed the men or women who stood in the way of their domestic bliss. They may well have thought murderous thoughts, but they stopped short of action. The proved and suspected murderesses were set apart from the millions of women who shared the same social atmosphere by crucial differences of personality which, in the absence of psychiatric testimony, can be but dimly

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and speculatively inferred from the printed documents. It was from the hidden recesses of the psyche, untouched by external forces and inaccessible to the historian, that the fatal impulse came.

In conceding that the sociology of crime, from the viewpoint of women's studies or any other perspective, does not fully explain the psychology of crime, Hartman follows the canons of responsible scholarship. Only rarely does her enthusiasm for her argument betray her, as when, denying that any of her heroines were conscious feminists, she imputes to previous commentators the opinion that Madeleine Smith was "a crusader against restrictive social codes." All they claimed, surely with justification, was that Madeleine was remarkably uninhibited by the conventions that supposedly protected the innocence of an early Victorian maiden. It is more than a little startling to discover so well informed an exponent of women's studies confusing the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception with that of the Virgin Birth. But such cavils are few. Readers attracted by the book's slightly meretricious subtitle will find that, apart from the darker implications of "unspeakable crimes," the book lives up to its billing. The criminous particulars, where relevant, are by no means suppressed. Other readers, more judiciously inclined, will welcome *Victorian Murderesses* as a valuable contribution to social history, informative and at the same time agreeably provocative.

RICHARD D. ALTICK

The Ohio State University

Browning's Youth by John Maynard. Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1977. Pp. xix + 490. \$20.00.

There is no doubt about it: we are much better situated with respect to Browning biography than was the case a decade ago, when the rather leaden account by Griffin and Minchin and Betty Miller's whimsical attempt to lure her subject to the psychiatrist's couch were the Scylla and Charybdis of many a scholar. The first real relief came with Maisie Ward's two-volume study, which had the merit of balance even while incurring the stigma of being "popular"; subsequently Park Honan and the late William Irvine produced, in *The Book, the Ring, and the Poet* the nearest equivalent in Browning studies to Gordon Haight's biography of George Eliot. Even Honan and Irvine, however, did not prove absolutely impervious to the temptation of the occasional sneer or the use of quotation out of context. Professor Maynard, in focusing on the "first twenty to twenty-two years" of Browning's life "when he was most fully immersed in his home environment," is clearly not entering any competition but rather trying, as intensively as possible, to immerse us in virtually every traceable influence—literary, religious, musical, artistic, personal, geographical—which helped shape the young Browning. The result is a major contribution to Browning studies and a model for parallel studies of the formative years of other Victorians.

Professor Maynard has wisely eschewed chronological organization in favor of

a thematic division of the material which allows him to move back and forth as needed between a particular aspect of Browning's youth and its effect on his maturity. Part One describes in detail the poet's early environment: Camberwell, his family history and familial surroundings, and his early reading and exposure to art. Thus, for example, the chapter entitled "Self-Consciousness," taking as its epigraph the famous passage from *Pauline* ("I am made up of an intensest life,/Of a most clear idea of consciousness/Of self"), traces the boy's domestic life, the Evangelical views of his mother and her much less-noted interest in nature, and the physical topography of the immediate surroundings as they looked in Browning's day, relating all this as well to the later poetry and to what Browning derived from the Romantics. The conclusions of the chapter are not strikingly new—in fact, they are rather familiar landmarks in Browning criticism—but they are richer, more resonant for the unexpected wealth of material which has been brought to bear on them: religious tracts in the possession of his mother, contemporary maps and prints of the Camberwell area, and unpublished material from the Hall Griffin papers, a fruitful source of data for much of the book. In the ensuing chapter, "Objectivity," Maynard illuminatingly discusses Browning's possible indebtedness to his father's sketches of "quirky types" for the characters of the later poems, yielding a new perspective on the whole question of Browning and the grotesque. The discussion of his father's library is much fuller and more searching than De Vane's; where the *Handbook* is content to suggest sources, Maynard is concerned rather with the more difficult and sophisticated task of defining sometimes elusive influences, and he never steps beyond the boundaries of plausibility in doing so. Likewise recreated in far richer detail than ever before is Browning's circle of friends and the "cosmopolitanism" of his family, with its far-flung relationships to the world of banking and international finance. The chapter on art and music is a shade less satisfying; despite a highly suggestive paragraph on page 150, I rather suspect that more remains to be done on the effects of the Dulwich collection on Browning's youthful consciousness. But even here Maynard has helped point the way.

Part Two, "The Development of a Poetic Nature: First Steps," analyzes Browning's relationship to his immediate literary predecessors, the role played by the Flower family in his aesthetic development, and *Pauline*, for which we are prepared by a more searching and subtle evaluation of the poet's complex relationship to Shelley than I have ever seen. If I have any reservations at this point, it is that perhaps at moments Maynard's line of approach, almost inevitably, unloads more autobiography on *Pauline* than it really needs to bear. Browning's poetry in the 1830's, after all, needs to be seen not only in the context of his personal development but of the literary climate of the time. For example, Maynard provides a fascinating discussion of Browning's explanation of the genesis of *Pauline* in the "childish scheme" whereby he was to execute works of art in different media and under different guises:

This explanation distances Browning a long way from this work. If it were accepted fully it would mean that *Pauline* should be viewed not as an intimate, confessional work by Browning about his internal development but as a detached look at one kind of personality, as

essentially a dramatic monologue. Only a very few readers have been ready to accept this view of the poem. It seems rather blatantly an attempt on Browning's part to wish his first work away as it is and replace it with what he might have wished it to be after the fact. What seems actually to have happened is that Kean's acting in Shakespeare began to suggest to him a different kind of art as he was in the midst of writing *Pauline*. (p. 222)

Yet I suspect that Browning's hesitation here is reflective of a broader cultural uncertainty about how best to assimilate the lyrical and confessional strains of the Romantics without surrendering either to egotism or to inadvertent self-exposure. It is an uncertainty shown not only in the calculated hedge of the subtitle of *Pauline*, "A Fragment of a Confession," but in Tennyson's "Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind," especially when we restore the remainder of the title as it appeared in 1830 ("...Not in Unity with Itself"), and in Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, which followed *Pauline* a few months later and in which a mind "not in unity with itself" is split between English editor and German professor. (Indeed, one wonders, perhaps fruitlessly, whether Browning's sense of the grotesque, his delight in paradoxes and in the incongruous jostling of solemn and serious, might not have been encouraged by an occasional immersion in the latest *Fraser's*, in which *Sartor* appeared during Maginn's editorship.) My complaint here, then, is not that Maynard is wrong, but that he might have cast his net wider than he has, drawing not only on Browning's youth but on the contemporary literary scene for his case.

But to deal with *Pauline* is, in any event, to tread on very crowded critical ground. *Browning's Youth* regains momentum in the third and last section, on education.¹ Maynard reconstructs as much as can be reconstructed of the poet's early schooling, his home tutoring, and his stay at London University, and in the process suggests that Browning's education was not quite the miscellaneous hodgepodge it has been made out to be, but was in fact quite rigorous at a number of points. We also begin to get a better hold on the background of *Paracelsus* than has heretofore been available. Browning's gradual acquisition of a sense of the past is the real subject of this section, a sense bolstered by his training in classical and modern foreign languages, his growing knowledge of English literature before 1800, and his Protestant English background. We return to Camberwell and the paternal library, but this time from the point of view of their effect on intellectual development rather than their part in familial influence. Where Browning is shown to have been most limited—and it was to be true of him all his life—was in his response to the growth of scientific knowledge. In Professor Maynard's final picture this

¹Normally footnotes to book reviews are something of an affectation, but I would rather relegate to an ungracious footnote two minor but puzzling (because uncharacteristic) slips in the last section: Professor Maynard's apparent misreading of the famous passage on "the doctrine of the enclitic De" in "A Grammarian's Funeral" so that the phrase "dead from the waist down" is in apposition to "enclitic" rather than the grammarian (p. 271), and his use of "contemptuous" where he means "contemptible" (p. 347).

does not emerge as a major blemish. For "in each of [Browning's] premature efforts toward his ultimate role as an artist there was a movement, even though sometimes a dialectic movement, toward the complex poetic role that would ultimately suffice" (pp. 351-352). *Browning's Youth* is the best charting of that movement we have yet been given.

LAWRENCE POSTON, III

University of Illinois at Chicago Circle

The Reader's Art: Virginia Woolf as Literary Critic by Mark Goldman.
The Hague: Mouton, 1976. Pp. 142. \$14.90.

The current condition of American university presses, their frequent subservience to fluctuations in taste and their increasing attempts to preempt the market of trade presses in order to survive economically may very well result in their losing their real lives in the process of saving their apparent ones. The occasion for such an observation is Mark Goldman's solidly based, clear-sighted, informative and well-written examination of the essays of Virginia Woolf in an effort to place her as a critic. It is good that Mouton has seen fit to publish this book, but it would have reflected an even better state of affairs if an American university press had foregone some trendy polemic that will be an antique tomorrow in order to publish a book that has fresh insights into Woolf that will be interesting and worthwhile next year as well as this.

Professor Goldman (at the University of Rhode Island) has made an effort to lift the curse of "impressionistic" from the long-standing characterization of Woolf's critical essays, a characterization that I myself will be less prone to make in the future as a result of Goldman's strong case. He attempts to show that 1) the essays are not *merely* impressionistic and that 2) impressionistic is not equivalent to "bad." He accomplishes these ends by demonstrating that behind Woolf's "impressions" are clear-cut and stable criteria of judgment rather than personal whimsy or ethereal sensibility. For example, by tracing her essays on literary works from the time of Chaucer to the 20th Century he is able to show that Woolf sought, in the works of others as well as in her own fiction, a synthesis of "prose" and "poetry," that is, a fusion of "realism" or "fact" with image or "vision." The now familiar fact-vision antinomy associated with Woolf reflects a desire to merge the mundane, commonplace data of routine daily life with glimpses of transcendence. Thus, according to Woolf, the wild and bizarre qualities of Elizabethan drama, though they may feed our imagination, frustrate our wish to relate literature to recognizable life, while the solidity of Arnold Bennett in placing his "reality"—and even the solidity of Jane Austen—leave us with a hunger for the opening up and expansion of the commonplace, a glimpse behind the veil. What Woolf seems to value most of all in a literary work (and what is capable of fusing fact and vision) is an *emotional* organization, that is, a kind of Coleridgean organic

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unity provided not by rigidity of structure (as we find, I must venture to say, in Woolf's own misbegotten novel, *The Waves*) but by an emotional embrace through which the details of a Sterne or a Turgenev (two of Woolf's favorites) are held together. We see such an ordering, of course, beautifully achieved in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, a classic instance of such a holding together, "an emotional pattern stemming from a subjective center of consciousness," as Goldman puts it in another connection.

Along with her desire for a fusion of fact and vision, Goldman demonstrates rather convincingly that Woolf was indeed much concerned with traditional esthetic standards and with the serious damage to modern literature that resulted from their disappearance. "What is clearly revealed...and implicit throughout her essays is a creative tension in her criticism between the emotional response, the impression, the experience of the work, and its rational explanation and evaluation—on formal grounds and in terms of traditional standards." Tradition and experiment, then, seem to be the critical counterparts to fact and vision in Woolf's esthetic: tradition corresponding to the "objective" and commonly shared world of fact, history and the truisms of daily life; and experiment being the method whereby vision or the insight beyond the rules of art can be incarnated on the page. The ideal work would combine tradition and experiment to achieve a union of fact and vision.

Besides showing us that "impressionistic" should not be equated with whimsical, Goldman goes on to assert that our contemporary horror of impressionistic response can no longer be justified and has been, in any case, an overreaction by the New Criticism against Victorian sentimentality, moralizing and obsession with the biography of the artist. Indeed, Goldman reminds us that reputedly "judicial" critics like Eliot have turned out after all to be personal and "subjective." The reader will be both surprised and impressed by the links which Goldman sees between apparent opposites like Woolf and Eliot.

As Murray Krieger has shown, one crucial dialectic of modern criticism derives from the conflict, first seen in T. E. Hulme and T. S. Eliot, between a belief in the romantic imagination and the classical impersonality of art. Eliot's earlier emphasis on impersonality, objectivity, and tradition were attempts to resolve the Coleridgean dilemma of subject and object by pretending to ignore the romantic theory of expression in favor of a classical theory of imitation. Among other things, the classical smokescreen of Hulme and Eliot was a way of escaping the stigma of the Pater-Wilde-Symons impressionist school.

Goldman's endeavor to show us that in criticism, ultimately, impressions may be all there are (though held in check by tradition, which personally might be regarded as past impressions) recalls an essay on subjectivity of response by Norman Holland in the Winter 1976 *Critical Inquiry*:

To a surprising extent, the modern American literary critic (and more recently the European) has sought the same impersonal, generalizable kind of quasi-scientific knowledge. We anglophones [sic; phobes?] reacted against the over-indulgence in subjectivity by Victorian and Georgian critics. We also reacted against the uncritical

use of extra-literary knowledge, connections that were often aimless and unconvincing between literary works and their authors' biographies or literary periods. We sought instead an analytical rigor....

....But when critics are being "objective," they set the literary work in marmoreal isolation, apart from other kinds of experience; and they cast themselves as dispassionate observers (like scientists or computers) of a process located outside the self and in the text....

This restoration of the "person" to the critic in both Holland and Goldman, a recognition that there is only a sensibility having impressions and not a receiver obtaining a message, may very well represent a new swing in the critical pendulum, an acknowledgement that there are no "poems out there" but just "people reading 'poems'." At any rate, such a view sees Virginia Woolf as an open practitioner of what is otherwise performed under a "smokescreen" of impersonality. Even those readers who find Woolf's essays frequently vexing or tiresome because of their prolixity of manner or repetition of figures of speech will henceforth have to see them as more substantial and firmly grounded in critical standards as a result of Goldman's lucid examination.

HAROLD FROMM

Indiana University Northwest

Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home by Roberto González Echevarría. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977. Pp. 307.

Roberto González Echevarría has published the first full-length study in English of the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier (1904-) and is to be complimented for having filled a gap which threatened to become an embarrassment. Carpentier is an important writer whose influence has spread from Latin America to Europe and who, until now, has lacked a spokesman in the English-speaking world. González Echevarría would seem to have produced "the right book at the right time."

And for some he may have: his study purports to bridge the gap between close textual analysis and the psycho-philosophical meditations of Jacques Derrida, but what he may have in reality created is another, more serious gap, one between the critic and the reader. Professor González Echevarría makes inordinate demands on his public: not only must it be familiar with the works of Carpentier, Borges, and other Spanish American writers, but it must also know the intricate code that makes up what is known as "post-structural criticism." The reader who comes to this text seeking information, be it of a biographical or an interpretative sort, will certainly find it, but he will have to struggle against the language of the text, one, it would seem, created to confuse rather than to elucidate.

At the end of his study, González Echevarría makes these statements about Carpentier:

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One Hundred Years of Solitude and *The Death of Artemio Cruz* are perhaps the two most notorious exponents of what came to be known in the sixties as the "total novel." Carpentier's legacy is this relentless attempt to synthesize history and the self in a form of Latin American writing. While in this sense Carpentier's work has merely repeated a gesture found in all Romantic and post-Romantic literature, he has given that enterprise a particular Latin American character—not, however, by demonstrating the autonomy of Latin American culture, as he once hoped, or by tracing the precise boundaries of a Latin American context. He has demonstrated, instead, the dialectics of dependence and independence that subtend any effort at cultural definition, and made manifest the pervasive heterogeneity of writing. The total novel is a Hegelian experiment whose failure is the very condition of its existence. By having repeatedly taken it to the limit where its unattainability becomes apparent, Carpentier has made possible the total novel and its ironic counterpart, the anti-novel. Both possibilities are already present in *The Lost Steps*, in that "I" that attempts to be one and is at the same time many. (pp. 273-274)

This is the clearest declaration González Echevarría makes concerning his enterprise and its relationship to literary scholarship; unfortunately it comes at the end of the book instead of the beginning. As an enterprise it is praiseworthy: Carpentier writes different kinds of literature, fiction, essays, journalism, musicology; these seem to be at odds with one another: just what is the relationship between the author (the *auctor* or authority) and text? Is he the master or is the text possessed of its own autonomous existence? What is the relationship between the artist's ever fluctuating self (his individual psychology, his racial origin, his sexual identity, his nationality) and the text that somehow expresses him?

For Mary Shelley and the Romantics (and later for Jorge Luis Borges) the text becomes a monster, beautiful as an idea, horrible as a fact. Such is post-Romantic literary life, we may add with a sigh: the writer (and the reader) are locked in the "prison-house of language," in a mode where falsification and metaphors are the only materials at hand, where truth cannot exist except as a working hypothesis. But we know all this: what does González Echevarría's study add to our knowledge about it and its effect on Carpentier? We learn a great deal about Carpentier's background from this study; we learn of the (not surprising) influence of Ortega y Gasset's *Revista de Occidente* on him, and of the (also not surprising) influence of Spengler's *Decline of the West* on him. In addition we have good readings of *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, *El reino de este mundo*, *Los pasos perdidos*, and *El siglo de las luces*, although even these suffer from too much plot summary. González Echevarría gets "inside" Carpentier's hermetic writing and shows us its intricate unities and for this we are in his debt.

Unfortunately his style obfuscates his methodology. What are we to do with a passage like this: "The fundamental question that *The Lost Steps* raised concerned the relationship between the artist and his product. If our reading of that novel reveals that relationship to be based, at best, on discontinuity, or, at worst, on a mere convention of literary criticism, what is it then that binds Carpentier's work into an *oeuvre*?" (p. 18)? This is a complicated way of saying something quite simple, an idea reiterated in the above-quoted

conclusion to the book. Equally confusing is this statement: "As an object in its most tangible form *¡Ecus-Yamba-O!* is baffling." (p. 64) (González Echevarría's idea that this book, published in 1933, is strange because it contains photographs is odd given the fact that Woolf's *Orlando* and Breton's *Nadja* both appeared in 1928, adorned with photographs.) Why was this sentence published in this form: "When he is a new-born baby a lizard falls on his abdomen; later, the family is cursed by Paula Macho, a widow who roams around the town casting spells and sexually initiating all the young men in ditches" (p. 75)?

González Echevarría's misuse of critical terminology leads him to confuse the reader with reiterated but never defined terms: "unmediated," "closure," "objectivize," "recovery of origins," "*décalage*," "fictionalize," "ciphered onto," "inscription," "totalizing desire," "subtend," "erasure," and "afferential play of signifiers." These terms, taken out of their original context, and mixed with an awkward prose style render González Echevarría's text at times incomprehensible. For this the Cornell University Press must bear some responsibility.

There are a few subjects one might want to see more fully explored in this book: the relationship between Carpentier and *Nadja* (an autobiographical fantasy complete with conversion) and the fact that the painted "Explosion in a Cathedral" is in fact "King Asa of Judah Destroying the Idols," painting by François de Nome (alias Monsú Desiderio). Also desirable would be a detailed discussion of Carpentier's style, that compact mass of words so much like Adorno's prose, which one might take as a symbol of the undifferentiated yet almost differentiated historical reality described in the texts. These are merely a reviewer's *desiderata*: González Echevarría has taken a first step toward a critical appreciation of Alejo Carpentier, and for all its faults the book deserves serious consideration.

ALFRED J. MAC ADAM

Exra Stiles College
Yale University

Frank O'Hara: Poet Among Painters by Marjorie Perloff. New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1977. Pp. xvi + 234. \$12.50.

When the Musée National d'Art Moderne opened in "The Gas Factory" or "The Refinery," the new Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou in Paris was the ideal structure for a retrospective on the Dadaist Marcel Duchamp. Far less suitable for the spirit of Frank O'Hara is Marjorie Perloff's *Frank O'Hara: Poet Among Painters*. The book is neither a biography of the poet, for "versions of specific incidents [do] not always coincide," nor an analysis of the myths surrounding the poet. "Interest has centered on the man rather than on the work," and Perloff's intent "is to right the balance" by emphasizing the poetry and O'Hara's importance as "one of the central poets of

the postwar period." Yet, it is precisely in the instruments that she chooses to accomplish her aim that distortions occur and those readers who saw O'Hara as the liberator of art from institutions now see him "institutionalized" and co-opted by "the great burdens of the past" that he was always too smart in life to be too drawn to. Readers are shown time and again the "influences" on his work, the seriousness with which he studied verse forms, including the ode, and the traditional nature of his syntactical experiments. Indeed, except for quotations, the strongest parts of Perloff's argument are her descriptive analyses of O'Hara's techniques and genres in Chapter Four, and one suspects that this is so because Perloff feels most at home discussing grammar and indulging in the comparative method. Her attempt at historical reconstruction in the book's opening chapter is, in contrast, a tangle of mis- and non-information: William Carlos Williams' attacks on T. S. Eliot began with his "Prologue to *Kora in Hell*" (1919) and not with the appearance of *The Waste Land*; Salmagundi Nos. 22-23 adds more than the names of Adrienne Rich, A. R. Ammons, and John Ashbery to those of M. L. Rosenthal's *The Modern Poets* (1967); and the "myth" of a "controversy of poets," while it allows the deployment of the comparative method, does not explain the real nature of the division.

The Fifties represented a time when, on the one hand, technology was working to expand the ranges of the individual with affluence and advances in travel and communications and, on the other, education was working to restrict the individual to "the great books," "the great tradition," and a role of custodian to the past. The directions were brought into accord by the work of academics either through ambiguity, irony, accommodation, Eliot's "mythic method," or with the *discordia concors* of the new metaphysicals. On all sides, universities advanced models of conformity and "bad faith," at the same time that, by leaving the university, people like O'Hara were finding new vistas available. For academics, art was "a criticism of life" and centered in "high seriousness" and a morality attached to character. For non-academics, the very "pseudo-statement" nature of art could allow valuable free play. Robert Lowell's "argument with action painters" over his wanting "to return to a sort of Tolstoyan fulness of representation, and their technical freedom [that] came from doing the opposite" typifies the difference. Lowell's "Tolstoyan fulness" relies upon views like W. H. Auden's on Christian character as the history of the effects of choice on possibility. For O'Hara, something else was at work. Art permitted a playing at roles—much as dancers, actors, and singers perform—which in passing might alter personality and which in the end results in a "characteristic style" rather than character. Thus, O'Hara can advocate "'a living situation,' whose 'free-wheeling accuracy' 'keeps you fresh looking'" and suggest to those who "would like to see art dead" a session at "the Cloisters reading Latin." Although the NDEA and the movement of creative writers into the universities and the universities' greater involvements with society and social issues in the late Sixties did much to bring the two sides together, the basic issues have remained unresolved.

Frank O'Hara: *Poet Among Painters* does little to alter the backward look of the university or its emphasis on character. Moreover, if the book does not

appreciate sufficiently "characteristic style," it does offer a fine sense of the poet's early development at Harvard and the University of Michigan and excellent insights into period and individual poems. Perloff is a skilled explicator, as her analyses of "Why I Am Not a Painter" and "Radio" demonstrate. She is also skilled at relating biography to a poem—a necessity, for if no other reason than O'Hara's "personism" gets elements of him and his surroundings into a work. In lieu of a correlation of life style and art, it is important to have such elements shown. Perloff also suspends "moral judgment" regarding O'Hara's personal life, though her rescuing of him from charges of "trivia" into "major" significance suggests that she has not suspended all moral judgments. Indeed, there is an attempt throughout to "redeem" the life in terms of the poetry, to underpin instead of destroy by her analyses the myth of the artist's being "a work of art." The book does convey, in addition, much of the excitement that Perloff feels at a poetry which looks "like a delightful game" but which also has "an uncanny way" of containing "the perishable fragrance of tradition," and her genuine appreciation for an expanding rather than narrowing art. Readers may wish at times that her emphasis on what prevents a poem's closure might be better balanced with what opens up a poem, but the reader has no doubt of the appropriateness of the book as an introduction for those who find themselves foundering amid O'Hara's surprising metaphors, images, and logical lapses and wish to go beyond the poems to traditions and facts about the individual who composed them.

JEROME MAZZARO

State University of New York at Buffalo

The Philosophical Anarchism of William Godwin by John P. Clark. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977. Pp. ix + 343. \$16.50.

Godwin's influence on the English Romantic poets, especially Wordsworth and Shelley, has long been of interest to literary scholars, but finally Godwin is also being studied for his own sake, as novelist and philosopher. In the 1975 MLA Bibliography (New York, 1977), most of the Godwin items dealt with his novels or literary criticism, not with his influence on others. It is the philosophy itself of Godwin that John P. Clark takes for the subject of his excellent book. This is the first book-length Godwin study since the 1965 Twayne volume by Elton and Ester Smith, and the first in-depth treatment of Godwin's thought since Burton Pollin's *Education and Enlightenment in the Works of William Godwin* (New York, 1963). Clark's study is more extensive than Pollin's and supersedes the third volume of F. E. L. Priestley's monumental edition of the *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (Toronto, 1946). Furthermore, Clark is the first critic since George Woodcock (London, 1946) to relate Godwin's political philosophy to anarchist theory and libertarian socialism.

The first part, "First Principles," illustrates the finest feature of Clark's study; he not only summarizes, in a readable fashion, Godwin's concepts of reason,

necessity, and human nature, but engages the appropriate scholarship in a critical dialogue. It soon becomes clear that Clark's major critical opponent is Priestley, whose views Clark convincingly refutes. That Priestly exaggerated Godwin's Platonism is a recurrent theme in Clark's commentary. In the second part, "Ethics," he starts to develop his central thesis, which is the primacy of Godwin's utilitarianism. With an impressive knowledge of utilitarianism's history and philosophical implications, he locates Godwin's philosophy more rigorously in the tradition of Bentham and Mill than any previous critic, including Elie Halévy (New York, 1928). In the last part, "Social and Political Theory," Godwin's political ideas, resting on a utilitarian foundation, are related to both classical liberalism and libertarian socialism. Clark also shows the contemporary relevance—and irrelevance—of Godwin's philosophical anarchism.

As good as Clark's study is, it still leaves some areas for further consideration. The task of placing Godwin in his historical context remains to be done. Also, the non-utilitarian aspects of Godwin's thought need more analysis; it is not enough to show the way in which Godwin deviated from a utilitarian logic because one must also *account* for the deviation, historically and philosophically. Nevertheless, this is an invaluable study of Godwin's philosophy that will be of use for a long time.

MICHAEL H. SCRIVENER

Wayne State University

The Literature of Memory: Modern Writers of the American South by Richard Gray. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977. Pp. xi + 377. \$16.00.

Richard Gray's purpose is "to offer a critical account of the literature of the Southern 'renaissance,'" concentrating on major writers and emphasizing their relationship to historical patterns. Between an introductory chapter on earlier writers and Ellen Glasgow and a final chapter on post-war writers, he divides his discussion into four parts: the Nashville Agrarians (Ransom, Tate, Warren, Davidson); literature on the farmer (Roberts, Caldwell, Wolfe); extensions of the plantation theme (Gordon, Welty, Porter); and an essay on Faulkner. His heroes are clearly Faulkner and Wolfe. The social and historical context is thin, and serves primarily to buttress Gray's main theme: the Southern writer has always faced the dilemma of reconciling two contradictory paradigmatic justifications of the South—Jeffersonian yeoman farmer and gentleman planter. Actually Gray is less interested in either the social and economic forces working on specific writers or the historical events in their fiction than he is with the more historiographical matter of a writer's engagement with traditions and his development of a reinterpretation that can be used "to understand and shape the present and future."

Modern Southern literature has for twenty years received more than its share of criticism, at its best marked by the combination of scholarship and insight provided by Louis D. Rubin, C. Hugh Holman, and Lewis P. Simpson. The main body of it, however, is often characterized by apologetics, narrow

formalism, or superficial thematic studies. Southern Literary Study now requires good literary scholars with training in allied fields such as folklore, psychology, history, and sociology, able to exploit recent research in these areas. Gray's book only in a small way strikes into new territories, but it does fill a definite need. The only other general survey of the period is John M. Bradbury's *Renaissance in the South* (1963), basically an organized catalogue of Southern writing from 1920 to 1960. Gray, a Briton at the University of Essex, provides a sound analysis of the writers he selects. His essays are rarely original except insofar as his particular themes—that of farmer and planter and that of "reinterpreting tradition"—provide a new way to perceive old data. To some this might also be the measure of his limitations. Do writers like Porter and Welty best lend themselves to this approach? Though the Black achievement in literature has been largely a Northern phenomenon, why no mention of Toomer, Hurston, or the early Wright? Does the author's strategy lead at the end to an overemphasis on Styron, whose writings happen to contain the particular criteria Gray has used all along, and to neglect of Walker Percy and Reynolds Price? Despite such minor distortions, however, this is finally a sound and useful survey of the Southern Renaissance. A good primary and secondary bibliography is included.

JOHN BASSETT

Wayne State University

Pilgrimage and Storytelling in the Canterbury Tales: The Dialectic of "Ernest" and "Game." by Charles A. Owen Norman; University of Oklahoma Press, 1977. Pp. ix + 253. \$12.95.

Prof. Owen's discussion of the storytelling in the *Canterbury Tales* derives from his view that as a consequence of Chaucer's revision of his original design "the 'game' of the storytelling replaces the 'ernest' of overt morality," and that, finally, "the 'game' of holiday travel yields richer meaning than the 'ernest' of the pilgrimage."

This thesis is a logical extension of the results of Prof. Owen's investigations of the design and development of the *Tales* which he has argued in a series of articles beginning in 1951. These studies have led him to the belief that the conventional view of the development of the *Tales* (an original plan having each pilgrim tell four tales, later abandoned in favor of a plan having only one tale per teller) is mistaken. Instead, Owen proposes that in Chaucer's later plan the pilgrimage was to end not in Canterbury but to be concluded with the return of the pilgrims to the Tabard; that the plan in which each pilgrim was to tell four tales was a late—not an early—part of the development; that the Wife of Bath and her influence dominate in the tales of the homeward journey; and that the Retraction, which Owen sees as being attached to the Parson's Tale and not to the *Tales* as a whole, was written in an earlier period (c. 1391-93) of Chaucer's life before his then-serious religious commitment had been replaced

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by a "return to a secular and mundane point of view [that] was as complete as had been his earlier rejection of it in the Retraction."

In support of this provocative explanation of the design of the *Tales*, Prof. Owen is concerned primarily to examine those parts of the *CT* that are central to his thesis. As a result, the more serious (and religious) tales receive not very much attention, and Owen finds little space to discuss alternative interpretations. But in his discussion of the tales he chooses to examine at length (particularly the tales of the first day, of the Nun's Priest, of the Pardoner, and of the Wife of Bath) Prof. Owen is consistently stimulating, very often original, and always perceptive. These terms, indeed, may be fairly applied throughout to a volume that Chaucerians, no matter what their views of the development of the *Tales*, will read with great interest.

DONALD MACDONALD

Wayne State University

The Spirit of Reform: British Literature and Politics, 1832-1867 by Patrick Brantlinger. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977. Pp. 293. \$14.00.

This is not a book about politics, and, despite its title, it is not even a book about reform. It is, however, about the *spirit* of reform as manifested in British Literature. If it were not mainly about literature, certain chapters, especially one on the Brownings, would be indefensible. As it is, all chapters, though complete essays on their own, do describe stages in a coherent history of reformist attitudes. The basic assumption behind this history is that "Ideas of social reform through politics were gradually supplanted by ideas of social progress in spite of politics" and that this "idea of progress gradually emerges in liberal thinking as the antithesis of the idea of reform..."

Professor Brantlinger has a gift for condensing an idea or an author's career into one or two crisp sentences. He is convincing in his examination of social and political relationships to literature and he provides clear accounts of historical conditions as they bear upon his theme. He is at his best perhaps when discussing literature at its most practical level, as in the early chapters on the 1830s and on Benthamite and anti-Benthamite literature, or at its more theoretical level, as in the chapters on concepts of realism in literature and contradictory notions of culture. He is always trustworthy on the social and political themes. But Professor Brantlinger does not seem to make a sufficient allowance for literature as art, as imaginative evocation. Like the Benthamites and Utilitarians he describes, he seems to demand that literature offer, before anything else, a solution for day-to-day, or at any rate era-to-era, problems. Consequently, his readings of Carlyle, Dickens, Tennyson, the Brownings, and some others are less generous than they might be. There is a touch of the schoolmaster in Professor Brantlinger's tone as he passes judgment, a schoolmaster, however, who knows his subject well.

Wayne State University

JOHN R. REED

Langston Hughes: An Introduction to the Poetry by Onwuchekwa Jemie. New York: Columbia University Press; 1977. Pp. xxi + 234. \$10.95.

Music and social critic Nat Hentoff, in a memoir devoted to great teachers, tells of once taking to F. O. Matthiessen a graduate paper he had just written on Langston Hughes. His youthful enthusiasm was severely questioned: "But how can you possibly justify this as poetry?" Matthiessen's point apparently was that critical judgment must not be subverted by mere sentiments of social justice pretending to be art. Hentoff, in reporting this, leaves hanging, like fire, the questions of how well he had represented Hughes and how fair had been Matthiessen's judgment. The effect, of course, is quite unfavorable regarding Hughes. A sizable black audience has always known Langston Hughes the poet, but the cold shoulders of critics, and not all of them white, have typically been turned against that recognition. John Unterecker acknowledges as much in his foreword to Onwuchekwa Jemie's *Langston Hughes: An Introduction to the Poetry*.

Jemie starts with a salient point: "Afro-American literature is pre-eminently one in which we watch in process the transmutation of oral into written forms and is pre-eminently a literature of struggle." Struggle, let us deal with this. To appreciate Hughes properly, Jemie tells us, we must take seriously conflicting forces operating strongly on Afro-American writers, what he calls "negative" and "positive" compulsions. Basically he means deprecation of black life, and apology, as opposed to affirmation. In the course of his study Jemie reminds us what a toll this negative compulsion has taken on black poets. It is an important context for understanding Hughes' affirmation. A Black American writer drawing close to his people, about and for whom he is writing, in affirming the significance of their lives, automatically joins struggle against malice or misapprehension, whether from without or within the group. Indeed, obvious since the 1920s, Hughes' acceptance and celebration of black life, with its cultural forms, is itself a comprehensive acceptance of struggle. As he might have replied to anyone who refused to get that point, "Ask your mama." Such a manifestation of struggle, Hughes' oeuvre, let it be said, is far from both simple-minded polemic and simple-minded local color. Jemie in fact spends most of his energies on how Hughes' work deeply engages and uses that tradition of black culture historically oral and symbiotically joined to music. Hughes' achievement as a prosodist, Jemie feels, is that he brought into the domain of poetry such forms as the blues poem, the jazz poem and the call-and-response of black theatre. As a mature poet, it is that he sustained throughout a long career his vision of a genuinely popular literature and strove to unify those impulses "toward the oral tradition and toward a literature of social struggle."

This is an important book for several reasons, perhaps all really one, aside from the useful chronological sketch and good bibliography which such introductions provide. With skill it addresses itself to the outrageous underestimation of an important poet, and arrives at a good time. The recent serious study of Hughes, begun in the sixties, will certainly be stimulated, and our impatience quickened for a definitive biography. As well, since its author is a West African teaching in the States, it brings an interesting cross-cultural resonance

to the claims of an oral tradition as against what Jemie calls "the excessive devotion to formal complexity, which characterizes the modernist sensibility and which is largely responsible for the low esteem of Hughes' poetry among the critics..." Ultimately, though, what is so compelling, despite whatever quibbles one may have, is that Jemie, himself a poet, writes as one who knows that the defining word, spoken and written, is vital to the survival of a people.

TODD DUNCAN

Wayne State University

Rediscovering Hawthorne by Kenneth Dauber. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977. Pp. xii + 235. \$13.00.

Kenneth Dauber has written a brilliant book. Not only has he read Hawthorne's career, examined the major romances, and developed a theory of the novel based on the author's presence within the text, but most remarkably, he has used Hawthorne's text as a paradigm for his own critical activity. Hawthorne fuses "purpose" with "genre" in the "neutral territory" of Romance—as Dauber joins "intuition" (somewhat like Paul de Man's "insight") with more conventional critical modes—to perform a literary work. Both must "cope" with a body of words—Hawthorne with his culture, Dauber with Hawthorne and Hawthorne criticism—and by working their will on that body which seeks to de-limit them, to reclaim conventions (Hawthorne) or hermeneutics (Dauber). Indeed, *Rediscovering Hawthorne* reads like Dauber's reading of a Hawthorne text: a development of themes, not accretive nor linear, but transformative of each other; a self-reflexive text which directs the reader backwards and forwards, whose final cause is an authorial voice; a reticence about the "autobiographical impulse"; an overly long introductory statement ostensibly dealing with aesthetics. The last is most interesting, since both use this occasion to make sly disclaimers: Hawthorne deprecates his works, Dauber limits the value of his "perhaps tautological" method to the merely "useful and interesting." Like "The Custom-House" which keeps Hawthorne's "inmost Me behind a veil," Dauber's first chapter shows us an "intuition" which would be concealed behind a precise and objective critical language.

For Dauber, Hawthorne's texts are characterized not by their unity or meaning, but their appeal to "intimacy," their invitation to an audience. Thus there are no true "allegorical" readings of the texts since hermeneutics implies a privileged position for criticism which denies such intimacy. Meaning may be revealed conventionally in the text as object, but Dauber is more interested in treating the text as action governed by a purpose which exists unstated between the texts. Once we realize that "purpose" precedes "meaning," we can see that any interpretation is true in a sense. Each hermeneutical style becomes another facet on the crystal lattice which is criticism, mirroring ourselves in a text which invites us to see our reflections. Confronting

such criticism, I feel like Hepzibah Pyncheon confronting the fantasy of an oriental bazaar whose reflected splendors shame her own meagre attempts at shopkeeping. A similar kind of mirroring occurs in *The Blithedale Romance* where Zenobia is transfigured as a cold gem, dazzling Coverdale to the point of vertigo. In his criticism of this novel, Dauber describes the patterns of mirroring, and his language becomes in its abstraction and precision, almost dizzying, as he graphs the relationships of romance, realism and naturalism, describing them as mathematical functions. As with Zenobia, the life has finally gone out of the words (literature and criticism), and we are left with the sight of shimmering artifices, texts reflecting each other endlessly.

Since Dauber's Hawthorne is not the biographical Hawthorne but a "disposition toward works of literature," and since the audience is but the "hypothetical people the story invents," relationships are circumscribed by the world of words; we never get outside of texts, realized or "potential." Hawthorne never accorded "the grosser medium of words" such a privileged ontological status; and sight, the other element in the act of reading, usually proves disintegrative in Hawthorne's works. On such shaky ground, he would invite an intimacy; and a glance at his letters does reveal an extraordinary degree of literary performance in his most intimate relationships. But I would be careful not to define Hawthorne in terms of texts: to start with the literary performer is already to play his game, to concede the victory of style over substance, art over life, texts over people. Given such a limitation, certainly we cannot interpret or unify his texts but only point out the internal contradictions; by tracing the authorial voice from work to work, the "Hawthorne" we discover can only be a patchwork of words. We should keep in mind Holgrave's self-criticism: Phoebe, he says, has a genuine "intuition," but "he is merely clever." Dauber's readings proceed, he says, from his "intuition" which is, I think, outside the frame of aesthetics as he develops it. It shows when he discusses Hawthorne's capitulation to allegory in *The Scarlet Letter*, the deflected hostility in *The House of the Seven Gables*, the narrative spaces of *The Blithedale Romance* and *The Marble Faun*. He has a feeling for narrative texture that his metaphysical notions of "potential language" do not account for and often delimit: for instance, it is as if he can mention "nature" only after it has been subdued by Hawthorne's "art" in *The Marble Faun*, and by the refinement of his own system in his chapter on *Blithedale*. The criticisms and/or texts must apparently refine themselves out of existence, revealing only an authorial self speaking heart to heart with an audience they have brought into being.

One of the earliest glimpses of Hawthorne's boyhood concerns the visit of one of his cousins from Maine. As she was introduced to him, he was standing next to his mother, reading to her. His mother and aunt both explained to her his shyness by way of asking her indulgence. He led her to the empty coaches in the livery and rocked her in one until she begged him to stop; they then talked of Shakespeare and he narrated a play or two. On another notable occasion she found him orating from the rooftop, his back pressed to the chimney; she was afraid to join him and he taunted, "Just like girls!" Nevertheless, she admits that eventually she "learned to understand him...(and)

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depended on him for amusement." Essentially, she capitulated to his narcissism, more encompassing than the self-love Dauber turns up in some of the shorter tales: only Hawthorne can assume the privileged position. This narcissism informs the literary performances as a manipulation of the "Gentle Reader," and must be understood to understand Hawthorne's works. Seeing the boy on the roof, historical critics might have analyzed the process by which he got there, or New Critics the central irony or paradox of his speech. Dauber has "learned to understand him" and celebrates the union of speaker, speech and audience his performance calls into being; and while that is a significant readjustment of our perspective toward Hawthorne's work, I think that joining Hawthorne on the rooftop ultimately is an action which merely complements his but cannot really explain it. The crucial question still seems to be the obvious one: "What does he think he's doing up there?"

JOHN FRANZOSA

Wayne State University

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IRA CLARK*

Ben Jonson's Imitation

Several recent accounts of Renaissance literary criticism focus on an open question at the center of Renaissance poetry: since humanists professed to imitate great predecessors, in what sense can they be said to have achieved original personal expression? Important studies like Baxter Hathaway's *Marvels and Commonplaces*, Rosalie L. Colie's *The Resources of Kind*, and John M. Steadman's *The Lamb and the Elephant* concentrate on explaining theories of imagination that fuse the real icastic with the ideal fantastic, on describing poetic forms that mix generic categories, and on elucidating tensions between theory and practice when poets show abstract universals in sensuous particulars.¹ Beyond scholarly concerns and our sense of the Renaissance as a period of increasing individualism, we recognize that Renaissance humanists were themselves self-conscious about this question. Jerrold E. Seigel reemphasizes the dilemma a humanist poet faced: though Petrarch over and again stressed the rhetorical principle of imitating models, in the *Secretum* he was disturbed by the inevitable breach between an imitator's life and his literature.²

Two sides of an hypothesis accounting for the anomaly between Renaissance humanists' professions of imitation and current celebrations of their originality can be seen in a pair of recent discussions of imitation. The first, H. A. Mason's *Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Period*, argues that programmatic *studia humanitatis* did not advocate translating words, phrases, and linguistic catches, but instead advocated creating better selves through imitating admirable humanity of the past.³ In addition he claims that humanistic poetic imitation discovered forms for expressing private feelings in old public modes. This latter point links to a second discussion of imitation, Marion Trousedale's "Recurrence and Renaissance: Rhetorical Imitation in Ascham and Sturm." Trousedale rediscovers in

* An Associate Professor of English at the University of Florida, Ira Clark has published essays on Daniel, Herbert, and Milton.

¹ New York: Random House, 1968; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973; San Marino: Huntington Library, 1974.

² *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 50-51.

³ London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959.

the important humanist Johann Sturm's *Nobilitas Literata* (1549) instructions about how to simultaneously imitate and transcend an ancient model: "What Sturm in particular suggests is that any text, be it classical or contemporary, served the Elizabethans less as a source in our sense than as a model in which the pattern was both copied and concealed."⁴

Mason and Trousdale clarify central concerns of Renaissance humanist imitation that too often are overlooked or just implied. Imitation involved a poet trying to communicate the moral concerns of his predecessor by imitating the larger formal devices, or rhetorical tactics, that he believed transmitted his original's soul. What was crucial in imitating was the relationship between the theme and the form presumed to carry that theme. Thus, the imitator was to follow both the ideals and the models of his predecessor as an inseparable entity; he could then extend that form and enlarge the purposes of that soul.

In *Discoveries* Ben Jonson suggests such an imitation: a personal and poetic re-creation of a model predecessor, a reforming of one's self and words according to patterns from the past, which might transcend both present and past. A poet ought to "make choise of one excellent man above the rest, and so to follow him, till he grow very *Hee*: or, so like him, as the Copie may be mistaken for the Principall." Indeed, imitators should so assimilate themselves to the greatest that they might "ever and anon find somewhat of them in themselves, and in the expression of their minds, even when they feele it not, be able to utter something like theirs, which hath an Authority above their owne" (8. 638, 616).⁵

A proposed reconciliation of imitation and individuality can be tested by the "ripest" of Jonson's "studies"—his epigrams. He has long been honored for the classical norms of his imitative poetry with its carefully crafted allusions to, adaptations from, and translations of Martial; but recent critics of these same poems revel as well in the tensions and contradictions that surround a posturing individualist.⁶

⁴ *ELR*, 6 (1976), 156-79; the quotation is taken from p. 158.

⁵ For Jonson's prose I use the edition by C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1925-52).

⁶ For a good summation of the classical Jonson see R. S. Walker's "Jonson's Lyric Poetry," *Criterion*, 13 (1934), 430-48, and for its relation to English plain style see Wesley Trimp's *Ben Jonson's Poems* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1962). For translations, adaptations, and allusions see Thomas

In order to argue that Jonson's practice followed his theory of poetic imitation, it will be necessary immediately to reexamine both preceding ideas about poetic models for imitation and his own statements, so as to establish central principles governing imitation. After that we must review what Martial's epigrams appeared to Renaissance editors, commentators, and teachers to be and do. We can then ascertain how Jonson looked at Martial's epigrams and whether he understood Martial in such a way that he might have chosen Martial's epigrams as models, with consideration for his personal integrity and expression. Finally we can judge from a single example, if Jonson seems to have so imitated a pattern in Martial's epigrams that he translated himself into Martial till he transcended that translation into an over-Martialed Ben.

I

Two central humanist tenets about imitation, traceable to classical ideas, require our attention. First, imitation of literary models rather than life, secondary imitation, is at the center of humanity since it provides the means of transmitting civilization. Next, secondary imitation leads to personal reformation by which the imitator can ultimately surpass the original author.⁷ Humanists self-consciously tried to regain the past by choosing ancient styles of life and literature to imitate and surpass, emphasizing that they should thereby earn adept and adaptable personal expression, the highest individual careful examination of texts for methods; next, development of achievement.

K. Whipple's *Martial and the English Epigram from Sir Thomas Wyatt to Ben Jonson*, University of California Pubs. in Modern Philology, v. 10, no. 4 (Berkeley, 1925), Kathryn Anderson McEuen's *Classical Influence upon the Tribe of Ben* (Cedar Rapids: Torch Press, 1939), the notes in Herford and Simpson, and James A. Riddell's "Seventeenth-Century Identifications of Jonson's Sources in the Classics," *Ren. Quart.* 28 (1975), 204-18. Prominent recent critical articles include Paul Cubeta's "'A Celebration of Charis': An Evaluation of Jonsonian Poetic Strategy," *ELH*, 25 (1958), 163-80, William V. Spanos' "The Real Toad in the Jonsonian Garden: Resonance in the Non-dramatic Poetry," *JEGP*, 68 (1969), 1-23, Arthur Marotti's "All About Jonson's Poetry," *ELH*, 39 (1972), 208-37, and R. V. Young, Jr.'s "Style and Structure in Jonson's Epigrams," *Criticism*, 17 (1975), 201-22.

⁷ See the opening discussions of both H. O. White, *Plagiarism and Imitation during the English Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935), and J. W. H. Atkins, *English Literary Criticism: The Renaissance* (London: Methuen, 1947), and particularly pp. 87-91.

Many *Discoveries* Jonson "Made vpon Men and Matter: as they have flow'd out of his daily Readings; or had their refluxe to his peculiar Notion of the Times" evolved from his ruminations on the writings of Juan Luis Vives, the major humanist who influenced all the English Renaissance.⁸ In *De Tradendis Disciplinis* Vives' concern with imitating large rhetorical forms requires, in the beginning, careful examination of texts for methods; next, development of theories from models; and finally, individual adaptation of basic theories for personal expression.⁹ Since imitation of models is the central means of teaching all behavior, and because no one exemplar can encompass the multitude of potential excellences or evade the myriads of possible flaws, an imitator should select models eclectically. Furthermore, an imitator should attend the mind working in an expression more than its external style, for what he emulates is sensibility and judgment. Finally, every imitator should, through an exacting examination of his literary heritage, choose primarily those models compatible with his own disposition and only secondarily those suitable to his subject. In short, Vives conceived of imitation as essentially reforming and individualizing.

The notion that imitation provides for living before writing is a principle in a number of Jonson epigrams. In "To William Roe" (*Epig.* CXXVIII), whose prominent family Jonson admired and aided, he advises a young man first embarking on his tour to distil moral models from his observations and integrate their spirit into his own personality. Reading extends the principle. Jonson congratulates the Countess of Rutland, talented and admired daughter of Sir Philip Sidney, for assimilating the spiritual essence of splendid behavior from literary models (*Under.* 52). Finally, imitating another author is the basis of great art; Jonson himself has served as the model for his former man, Richard Brome. In commending *The Northern Lasse*, he attacks poetasters who have not learned their craft because they have not imitated a master, as he praises "My Old Faithfull Servant: And (By His Continu'd Vertue) My Loving Friend," who has:

⁸ For Jonson see Mason, pp. 263ff., Trimpi, pp. 40ff., and Herford and Simpson's notes; in general see White, particularly pp. 59 and 67, and Atkins on Ascham, pp. 87-91.

⁹ I follow *Vives: On Education*, a translation with an informative introduction by Foster Watson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913); the central passage is on pp. 189-94.

BEN JONSON'S IMITATION

I had you for a Servant, once, *Dick Brome*;
 And you perform'd a Servants faithfull parts:
 Now, you are got into a nearer roome,
 Of *Fellowship*, professing my old Arts.
 And you doe doe them well, with good applause,
 Which I, your *Master*, first did teach the Age.
 By observation of those Comick Lawes
 Which I, your *Master*, first did teach the Age.
 You learn'd it well; and for it, serv'd your time
 A Prentise-ship: which few doe now a dayes.¹⁰

An important axiom can be discerned through Jonson's self-gratulatory commendation of Brome. If now he is the comic model for his age, once he was a pupil who built on what the classics and "his Master, Camden, taught him." In the guildcraft system of secondary imitation a new craftsman may become greater than past masters.

Such, in summary, is the context of Jonson's most familiar critical pronouncements on secondary imitation, those in *Discoveries*.¹¹ After he declares the necessity of both genius and practice for poets, as he does in honoring Shakespeare, he turns to the requirement of imitating models:

The third requisite in our *Poet*, or *Maker*, is *Imitation*, to bee able to convert the substance, or Riches of an other *Poet*, to his owne use. To make choise of one excellent man above the rest, and so to follow him, till he grow very *Hee*: or, so like him, as the Copie may be mistaken for the Principall. Not, as a Creature, that swallowes, what it takes in, crude, raw, or indigested; but, that feedes with an Appetite, and hath a Stomacke to concoct, divide, and turne all into nourishment. Not, to imitate servilely, as *Horace* saith, and catch at vices, for vertue: but, to draw forth out of the best, and choisest flowers, with the Bee, and turne all into Honey, worke it into one relish, and savour: make our *Imitation* sweet: observe, how the best writers have imitated, and follow them. . . . But, that, which wee especially require in him is an exactnesse of Studie, and multiplicity of reading, which

¹⁰ I quote verse from *The Complete Poetry of Ben Jonson*, ed. William B. Hunter, Jr. (New York: Doubleday, 1963).

¹¹ For a discussion of Jonson's few references to primary imitation, see Daniel G. Calder's "The Meaning of 'Imitation' in Jonson's *Discoveries*," *NM*, 70 (1969), 435-40.

maketh a full man, not alone enabling him to know the *History*, or Argument of a *Poeme*, and to report it: but so to master the matter, and Stile, as to shew, hee knowes, how to handle, place, or dispose of either, with *elegancie*, when need shall bee.

(8. 638-39)

By following several sources Jonson affirms that the imitation of models is basic to poetic composition; by assimilating these sources into his personal style he makes an imitation his own declaration. His opening and close establish a first commitment: a poet imitates models in his life and in his craft. Although there ought to be one primary model, no single predecessor is sufficient; to follow only one would mean to imitate mistakes as well as successes and furthermore, to limit oneself to slavish copying. His second commitment specifies how to imitate models: a poet must examine till he understands the fullness and variety of all excellent precedents before he distils their essence (not their surfaces) into the idea for a new poem. His third commitment is to maintaining personal integrity: a new invention has to reflect the humanity of its author. Jonson's last commitment leads through other frequently quoted passages (the ancients are guides not commanders, rules form helpful prescriptions not restrictive proscriptions, one must assimilate not steal from predecessors) by way of returning to the goal of imitation (8. 567, 641, 586).

Jonson's second commitment is the one which indicates that trying to imitate a model's soul is to be accomplished through trying to understand and follow the forms that communicate it. This procedure seems to be the same one that Sturm is advocating when he emphasizes meticulously reading a text (to understand it, to observe particularly, even schematically, the order of its parts, and to examine its display of the matter) before practicing its forms.¹² What is central to Renaissance imitation is that the art imitated is the formal pattern supposed to be bearing an author's soul and affecting a reader's.

For Jonson and other humanists this secondary imitation of the larger forms and expansive spirit of the ancients is liberating and evolutionary: present and future grandeur derive from immersion in the past. The process that begins in apprenticeship produces

¹² I believe this parallels, with the final objective being imitation of a model's soul, Trousdale's insight into formal imitation; for elaboration of Sturm's schema and extension of his implications, see pp. 165ff.

greater masters than before, precisely because understanding re-creation of the forms and the spirit of the past attains authority that can transcend both model and imitator. Thus the final humanist purpose of imitating models is to use the past in order to recover and advance mankind: "if wee can make farther Discoveries of truth and fitness then they, why are we envied? Let us beware, while wee strive to adde, wee doe not diminish, or deface; wee may improve, but not augment." (8. 627)

II

Approaching a Renaissance poet's imitation of his model's spirit and form does not require us to reexamine past studies, which at one pole identify local borrowings such as diction and wordplay, syntactic parallel and rhetorical device, phrase and line echo, and at the other discover adaptation, paraphrase, and translation.¹³ Instead, it requires us to consider how Renaissance critics, teachers, and students interpreted the thematic effects of a model and described the formal, tactical causes of these effects. For then we can look at whether or not the imitator seems to aim for the same objectives with awareness of their presumed causes, in order to determine if he seems to follow, test, and extend them. Thus we need to ask a series of questions about Renaissance attitudes toward Martial. What, in particular what ends, made Martial a popular poet to imitate? What specific structures were supposed to achieve his effects? What were considered his weaknesses? How could his weaknesses be corrected and his excellences improved on?

Hoyt H. Hudson's *The Epigram in the English Renaissance* is a testament to Martial's popularity.¹⁴ Beyond covering a wide range of epigrammatists, he shows that imitating Martial's epigrams formed a considerable part of most school and college curricula. In his first chapter, on the nature of epigram, he suggests why people who lived in an era that honored rhetoric as the highest human accomplishment and judged each other on the ability to handle words

¹³ Valuable inquiries have been made: in addition to those already cited, note such close studies as George A. E. Parfitt's "Compromise Classicism: Language and Rhythm in Ben Jonson's Poetry," *SEL*, 11 (1971), 109-23, and "The Nature of Translation in Ben Jonson's Poetry," *SEL*, 13 (1973), 344-59, and discussions of general effects like Mary I. Oates's "Jonson's 'Ode Pindarick' and the Doctrine of Imitation," *PLL*, 11 (1975), 126-48.

¹⁴ Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947.

persuasively, often imitated the epigram. To produce verse on call was a requisite grace, and the epigram is preeminently occasional verse. Definitions in Renaissance dictionaries and editions begin by pointing out that epigrams were first engraved on columns, pedestals, and gravestones, and over doors and windows for specific locations, events, and audiences. So they had to be useful for almost any end, able to reflect almost any notion. The classification and definition problems that epigrams caused Renaissance literary theorists are instructive. Bernard Weinberg notes Robortello's characteristic difficulties: the epigram can be short or long, sad or gay, satiric or eulogistic.¹⁵ And Tommaso Corra, who believed the epigram important enough that in 1569 he produced a poetic treatise based on it, pointed out that its subordinate forms (epitaph, epicede, monody, threnody, eulogy, elegy, palinode, and more) were so multifarious that it proved to be an appropriate genre for any of the three branches of rhetoric—judicial, deliberative, or epideictic.¹⁶ Its very value rested in an adaptability that defied classification, its usefulness on all occasions for all purposes.

If epigram is suited for all arguments, it is particularly apt for the ceremonial or epideictic, in which we praise or blame. The first point to be drawn from this fact is noted by all. Corra is representative: the epigram influences its subjects by either *laus* or *vituperatio*, commendation or detestation, during which it displays the "depth of baseness present in the vices, [and] an almost divine glory in the virtues."¹⁷ Generally we tend to think of epigram as satiric, agreeing with Sir John Davies' address to the muse in his first epigram: it "Taxeth under a particular name,/A generall vice that merits publique blame."¹⁸ Though the moral didacticism in panegyric epigram is not readily recognized today, O. B. Hardison's *The Enduring Monument* shows that during the Renaissance eulogy was considered a primary means of urging people to emulate virtue and that satire and panegyric are not opposed but complementary

¹⁵ *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 399-401.

¹⁶ See Weinberg, 1, 186.

¹⁷ Weinberg, 1, 185. After completing this paper, I learned that this point was emphasized in a discussion at the 1976 MLA meeting. See the abstracts for papers by Jonathan Hamholtz, Peter Medina, and Hugh MacLean, *SCN*, 35 (1977), 16-17.

¹⁸ I quote *The Poems of Sir John Davies*, ed. Robert Krueger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

tactics for urging moral behavior.¹⁹ The title of Richard Nicchols' 1614 volume, *The Furies: with Vertues Encomium. Or, The Image of Honour. In two Bookes of Epigrammes, Satyricall and Encomiasticke*, illustrates that English Renaissance epigrams were just as likely to be one as the other.²⁰ His one part attacks stereotyped vices under generalized, often Latin, epithets such as greedy or overcurious while the other honors the virtues of named English gentry. Epigram is preeminently suited to, and in the Renaissance intended essentially for, the praise and blame of mankind on special occasions, in order to inculcate morality.

The second point to be drawn from the epideictic potential of the epigram follows from the first. By praising and censuring the motives and actions of humanity, the epigramatist portrays the whole of society. As Thomas Bastard puts it in *Chrestoleros* I. iii. (1598), "This is the middle labour of my pen,/To drawe thee forth (Reader) a mappe of men."²¹

But right at the heart of the epigram, its moral purpose, and at the core of imitating it, stood an embarrassment for the Renaissance: Martial, its prime exemplar. While his plain-spoken censure of widespread Roman vice was universally applauded, the applause competed with apologies for his obscenity, scurrility, bawdry, and lasciviousness.²² Martial himself establishes terms for his accusers while providing the means of his justification as early as the sixteenth epigram of his first book: "Sunt bona, sunt quaedam mediocria, sunt mala plura/quae legis hic. aliter non fit, Avite, liber."²³ Though often interpreted as referring to craftsmanship, this passage about books of poetry—few of which are good, more middling, most bad—can also refer to their subjects or morality. The poetry is thus because the world reflected is thus. Further, in X. xlvi he advises

¹⁹ (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), especially pp. 36-39.

²⁰ See also John Peter's survey observation in *Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 160-61.

²¹ I quote the Spenser Society edition, no. 47 (Manchester, 1888), p. 9.

²² I have found some help with Renaissance attitudes in the Delphin Martial's preface and notes by Vincentius Collesso (London: Benj. Motte, 1701 edition) and considerable useful quotation in the full nineteenth-century variorum that reprints the compilation of Renaissance editors Schrevelli made in 1670, 3 vols. (London: A. J. Volpy, 1822-23).

²³ In early editions this is numbered the seventeenth; I will put the current number first and any different Renaissance number next (I. xvi, or xvii).

Matho: "Omnia vis belle, Matho, dicere. dic aliquando/et bene, dic neutrum; dic aliquando male." Some annotators took this to mean that Martial advises selected neglect of rhetorical strategies in order to show bare truth. But it is significant that in his 1615 edition of Martial which praises Jonson, Thomas Farnaby, Ben's friend, feels that the conclusion of this epigram refers to moral categories. "Interdum vel potentissimo vitia exprobra, nec semper dicas omnia ad assentationem divitum."²⁴ Nevertheless, only rarely did an English author, such as Webbe, agree with Farnaby and follow Scaliger's popular continental tactic that conceded many of Martial's epigrams to be obscene in order to affirm many others to be chaste.²⁵ Instead, from Timothy Kendall's *Flowers of Epigrammes* (1577) to Sir John Harington's *Epigrammes* (published in 1615) they congratulated themselves for converting vindictiveness and scurrility into reprimand and chastity.²⁶

The very real problem facing would-be imitators in the English Renaissance was that Martial's most embarrassing characteristic also provided his most effective virtue—his pointed, cauterizing wit. The recurring adjectives Renaissance authors attached to Martial are *lepodem*, witty, and *acutum*, sharp; other commonly associated words include the adjective *nervosus*, sinewy, and the nouns, *fel*, gall or bitterness, *vim*, force or might, and *acrimonium*. Their description of his epigrammatic tone is summed up in the title of the twenty-seventh chapter, Book One, of George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589): "*The manner of Poesie by which they uttered their bitter taunts, and priuy nips, or witty scoffes and other merry conceits.*"²⁷ Puttenham's terms are "mirthful," "jibing and jesting," and most frequently, "sharp."

Above all, one universal simile was applied to the epigram as Martial practiced it: it had a sting in its tail, like a scorpion's. The comparison is so commonplace that, in order to describe the epigram, the OED cites the scorpion entry from Topsell's bestiary. The concluding

²⁴For brief assessments of the relationship (the two praise each other in their writings) see Herford and Simpson, 1 and 11, 215-16 and 599, and Trimp, note 38 on p. 256.

²⁵See *Elizabeth Critical Essays*, ed. G. Gregory Smith, 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1904), 254.

²⁶Note, for examples, Kendall's and Bastard's introductions and Harington's epigram praising Bastard as epigrammatist-prophet-good physician (II. 64).

²⁷I quote the edition by Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), p. 53.

aculeus, a spine, sting, barb, point, spear or arrow tip, is the distinguishing feature of Martial's epigram in the minds of those who wrote about it. The epigram's witty close, or concluding bite, became its defining feature, the one that had to be imitated.

III

If Jonson was indeed trying to imitate Martial in a Renaissance way, that is to imitate Martial's essential consciousness that infuses and is embodied in the epigrams so as to write greater epigrams, then he had to concentrate on the two concerns that most preoccupied his contemporaries: how to incorporate Martial's morality in a way that avoided lewdness and scurrility, and how to sharpen the precision and increase the sting of the tail that transmits praise and blame in its verbal point. There seems little doubt that Jonson examined Martial diligently to accomplish both tasks. In marginalia to his Martial edition he takes editors to task for their unappreciative critiques.²⁸ And his frequent allusions to Martial in echoes, paraphrases, quips, and topics, both declare his self-conscious craft in the *Epigrammes* and repeatedly imply what he acerbically asserts "To My Meere English Censurer" (*Epig.* XVIII):

To thee, my way in *Epigrammes* seemes new,
 When both it is the old way, and the true.
 Thou saist, that cannot be: for thou hast seene
Davis, and *Weever*, and the best have beene,
 And mine come nothing like. I hope so.²⁹

In promoting his superiority to earlier English epigrammatists, Jonson is announcing his superior imitation of tradition.

But Jonson does not stop at following his models. He goes on to proclaim his victory over the first challenge, the scurrility his fellows agreed had damaged Martial, as well as over the second, the difficulty of emulating Martial's concluding point. He accepts his first challenge and announces his victory in the dedication to the *Epigrammes* when, opposed to Martial's introduction, he declares that the puritanical Cato can read his book. Occasionally he recalls the theme, as in the forty-ninth epigram or in "To My Booke," when

²⁸ For samples of marginalia in Jonson's Martial, see Herford and Simpson, 1, 253-54.

²⁹ For helpful annotations see Whipple, pp. 383-402, McEuen, pp. 14-27, and Hunter's edition, as well as Herford and Simpson.

early on he disavows Martial's lewdness and profanity, then in conclusion asserts his own integrity: "He that departs with his owne honesty/For vulgar praise, doth it too dearely buy." He implies recognition of the second challenge, which is ultimately moral as well as artful, by describing to Drummond of Hawthornden how some previous English epigrammatists failed: "A Great many Epigrams were ill, because they expressed in the end, what should have been understood, by what was said [—] that of S. John Davies." (1. 143) Through overexplicitness such epigrammatists as Davies often failed to provide the acute wit that praises or blames precisely and potently in the characteristic tail of the epigrams. Thus they failed to meet both its formal and its moral requirements.

Granted that Jonson studied Martial's epigrams exhaustively, read them in the same way though with more understanding than his fellows, and claimed the palm for his imitation of them, was he trying to achieve the same ends? That is, did he, like Martial was supposed to, concentrate on the formal poetic relationships of praise and blame? And did he gain his aim by modifying and extending Martial's forms so as to avoid Martial's acknowledged scurrility and improve on his acclaimed witty moral conclusions?

To say that Martial displayed a tableau of Roman characters and that Jonson designed a portrait gallery of London in epigrams as well as crowded plays from his humours through his dotages is to stop short.³⁰ For both go far beyond presenting microcosms of the citizenry in epigrams. Both present epideictics: they evaluate, commend or censure, on specific occasions. Though some of their epigrams, especially Martial's, may seem primarily exercises in wit, far more make moral judgments in order either to exhort their subject and audience to good or to dissuade them from bad. Thus, both usually juxtapose examples of opposed morals, such as the braggart captain or the fraudulent lord against the valiant captain or the true noble. In *Discoveries* Jonson even argues that a poet properly feigns commonwealths to evaluate and affect social, religious, and political life: "Wee doe not require in him meere *Elocution*; or an excellent faculty in verse; but the exact knowledge of all vertues, and their Contraries; with ability to render the one lov'd, the other hated, by

³⁰ Cf. two studies that focus on the *Epigrammes*, Anthony Mortimer's "The Feigned Commonwealth in the Poetry of Ben Jonson," *SEL*, 13 (1973), 69-79, and Bruce R. Smith's "Ben Jonson's *Epigrammes*: Portrait-Gallery, Theater, Commonwealth," *SEL*, 14 (1974), 91-109.

his proper embattaling them." (8. 595)³¹ And his clear purpose in plays, masques, and poems, like Martial's in epigrams, is to reenforce good by adulation while castigating evil by satire.³²

Jonson also agrees with Martial, his commentators, and Renaissance rhetoricians in recognizing the inseparability of praise and blame. Each requires the other, explicitly or implicitly. In a telling couplet Martial attacks one of his contemporaries: "Ne laudet dignos, laudat Callistratus omnes./cui malus est nemo quis bonus esse potest?" (XII. lxxx, or lxxxi) Who indeed is praised by one unable to discriminate bad from good? The principle is crucial for Jonson's corpus that insists his honorific masques be considered beside his satiric comedies. Characteristically it applies as well to single works such as masques which balance an antimasque castigating subhuman mayhem with an emblematic dance celebrating orderly society.³³ Both modes of accenting moral behavior are at least implicitly ever-present together in Jonson's epigrams. In "An Epigram to the Councellour That Pleaded, and Carried the Cause" (*Under*. 35), for example, Jonson dwells on praising his subject's victories in moral cases at the expense of his adversary barristers who argue not for good but gain. Much of his poetry, such as "To Sir Raph Shelton" (*Epig*. CXIX), is based on the distinction between actively choosing good and living by rules out of necessity. Finally, in many of his most interesting epigrams Jonson combines honoring someone for moral principles with enunciating a position he held with Martial: discrimination is necessary for honor. In one, "To Lucy, Countesse of Bedford, with Mr. Donnes Satyres" (*Epig*. XCIV), he focuses on analyzing morality and poetry in order to praise the daughter of Sir John Harington, a patroness who befriended many an author. In doing so he also consciously reenforces good and attacks ill:

Whose poems would not wish to be your booke?
But these, desir'd by you, the makers ends

"Hugh MacLean has made this emphasis on morality in alliance with decorum the foundation for "'A More Secret Cause': The Wit of Jonson's Poetry," in *A Celebration of Ben Jonson*, ed. William Blissett et al (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 129-66.

"For an approach based essentially on applying epideictic (as described by J. C. Scaliger) to questions of leadership, see Anthony J. Nania's "Ben Jonson's Epigrammes: The Ripest of His Studies," *DAI*, 35 (1974), 2234A-35A.

"See Stephen Orgel's *The Jonsonian Masque* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965).

Crowne with their owne. Rare poemes aske rare friends.
 Yet, *Satyres*, since the most mankind bee
 Their un-avoided subject, fewest see:
 For none ere tooke that pleasure in sinnes sense,
 But, when they heard it tax'd, tooke more offence.
 They, then, that living where the matter is bred,
 Dare for these poemes, yet, both aske, and read,
 And like them too; must needfully, though few,
 Be of the best: and 'mongst those, best are you.

Clearly, to praise the countess is to blame those who do not live as she does and to satirize them is in some sense to eulogize her. Each mode accurately reflects the whole of humanity by implying the other.

Similarly, both complimentary and satiric epigrams are pointed towards and at the tail. Usually the tail tersely and wittily sums up what the body of either kind of epigram has been saying or implying from some opening generalization through an argument or a series of examples. The figure is *acclamatio* or *epiphonema*, whose definition and use are explained by Erasmus, among others: "A climax in the form of an exclamation at the end of a narrative or proof... epigrams end with this."³⁴ Martial uses this method primarily. For instance, he leads through an initial series comparing Issa to various possessions up to identifying her with a lapdog, an image he sustains throughout the rest of the satiric epigram (I. cix, or cx). He ends the final series, descriptions of her fawning, by saying that her master, Publius, has painted a portrait so like her that if the picture and she were side by side, an observer could not tell if either is real, since both are painted, fake: "aut utramque putabis esse veram,/aut utramque putabis esse pictam." Or he honors Fabian by asking how a good though poor man who cannot be a pander, gladhandler, blackmailer, adulterer, lecher, gigolo, sycophant can get along in the world. He concludes that because Fabian is just a sure and faithful friend he is nothing in this world; his life will not be the success of a notorious rich freedman: "'Homo cetrus, fidus amicus—'/hoc nihil est: numquam sic Philomelus eris." (IV. v) Beside bestowing praise at the expense of blame, Martial's eulogistic epigrams often, as here, achieve extra concluding sting in the contrast between the person honored and some satirized foil.

³⁴ For definitions and examples, see Lee A. Sonnino's *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968), pp. 17-18; I quote p. 17.

The same overall structure, described as an inverted pyramid, has been claimed to be Jonson's chief form for both satiric and eulogistic epigrams.⁵⁵ He ends "On the Townes Honest Man" (*Epig.* CXV), a description of the flattery, sycophancy, cattiness, lying, freeloading, and backbiting of a representative of the old morality Vice or Iniquity, with a question and an answer: "Describ'd, it's thus: Defin'd would you it have?/Then, *The townes honest Man's* her errant'st knave." Several times he concludes panegyric lists of splendid attributes or grand comparisons, like those of his admired patroness, Lucy, Countess of Bedford (*Epig.* LXXVI) who is beautiful and wise, courteous and virtuous, able to control her own destiny with the emblems of the three Fates themselves, by claiming that the only possible descriptor is her own name: "Such when I meant to faine, and wish'd to see,/My *Muse* bad, *Bedford* write, and that was shee."

But building to a climax of praise can prove treacherously embarrassing, as Jonson was acutely aware. In his dedication to the *Epigrammes* he describes how, by apologizing if he has praised some undeserving subject: "I hope it will be forgiven me, that they are no ill pieces, though they be not like the persons." And he faces the difficulty artistically in "An Epistle to Master John Selden" (*Under.* 16):

Though I confesse (as every Muse hath err'd,
And mine not least) I have too oft preferr'd
Men, past their termes, and prais'd some names too much,
But 'twas with purpose to have made them such.

He claims to spend more time now evaluating a proposed subject before he commits himself to praise; and he declares that positive reinforcement of morality makes up for the risk. But neither rationales of additional care and justifying ends nor humble confessions eliminate the problem. He is still in a bind.

An alternate technique of closing a poem with a wittily pointed sting, one less often used but nonetheless available in Martial, could, by its inherent similarity to the difficulty, have offered Jonson a way out. All the wittier for its rarity, an epigram can conclude by surprising readers into realizing opposed implications about what

⁵⁵ See p. 80 of David Wykes's discussion in "Ben Jonson's 'Chast Booke'—*The Epigrammes*," *Ren. and Mod. Stud.* (Univ. of Nottingham), 13 (1969), 76-87.

it has already presented rather than summing up what has been clear throughout. In this kind we discover that we have to reread what went before, this time more warily. Occasionally, because of their close relationship, what at first seemed praise in one of Martial's epigrams can reappear as satire. A good case is the sixty-ninth epigram in his third book. He opens by wondering at, applauding, the chaste language of Cosconius for poetic virtues that turn out opposed to his own. He concludes by contrasting two sets of readers: his are knowledgeable and worldly wise, "at tua, Cosconi, venerandaque sanctaque verba/a pueris debent virginibusque legi." Dutifully labeled by Renaissance editors, the concluding lines turn the preceding compliments into sarcasm: the readers of Martial's rival are young and inexperienced, not fit and wise.

Martial's means of surprising readers, by forcing us to recognize that what we had heard as applause we should now hear as hissing seems to be a principle Jonson understood. The technique of several of his epigrams rests in their potential to be taken either of two ways—till the end. It is conspicuous in "On My First Daughter" (*Epig.* XXII). The poem seems self-comforting since a dying infant retains her innocence and so returns to heaven. But the final line, reverting to initial remorse by praying "Which cover lightly, gentle earth," lays bare the poet's anguish and requires us to reconsider the comfort.

More intriguing is another poem that ends in an ambiguous way, a way moreover that resembles Jonson's confessed difficulty of praising an unworthy subject. In "To the Ghost of Martial" (*Epig.* XXXVI) he writes:

Martial, thou gav'st farre nobler *Epigrammes*
To thy *Domitian*, than I can my *James*:
But in my royall subject I passe thee,
Thou flattered'st thine, mine cannot flatter'd bee.

The only way Jonson's monarch (or any one else) could not be flattered is if he lived up to the praise bestowed. In James's case, this would require first, becoming administratively and fiscally sound, as Martial's emperor was. More to the issue (especially in view of James's notorious neglect of the bureaucracy and financial extravagance), this would also entail James's becoming a patron of poets, which Domitian was not. This is because patronage granted deserves praise but neglected admits only flattery. Thus the epigram cuts at least two ways. Risking possible flattery by honoring James in

order to urge him to greatness, the epigram also borders on satirizing him if he fails to live up to that eulogy. The final reading depends on James's actions, on the response of the poem's subject.

In general, if someone lives up to the claims Jonson makes, then that person becomes a model to emulate and the poem is full of praise; but by as much as that person fails to meet the claims, by just so much he is a butt for ridicule and the poem is full of blame. Jonson needs to argue and compose so that his problem of honoring an unworthy subject who fails to be good calls down the interpretation of satire instead of calling forth that of flattery. He needs a mode of cutting just two, not three ways.

Jonson's clearest epigrammatic statement of his ultimate principle that protects his integrity by establishing satire, not flattery, as the edge opposite eulogy appears in "To My Muse" (*Epig.* LXV). He begins chagrined:

Away, and leave me, thou thing most abhord
That hast betray'd me to a worthlesse lord;
Made me commit most fierce idolatrie
To a great image through thy luxurie.

He wishes the bewhored muse off on some other poet, who searching for patronage will lose personal integrity. But after he welcomes the poverty that will surely follow, he concludes with the realization that saves his honesty, describes a moral standard, and espouses that standard as a way of constructing epigrams:

But I repent me: Stay. Who e'er is rais'd,
For worth he has not, He is tax'd not prais'd.

Such a double-framed context, where a choice between two opposed readings is determined by the subject to whom the poem is addressed, saves the morality and integrity of the poet and the poem. Most important is that Jonson could have expanded these central twists from Martial's hint.

It seems apparent that Ben Jonson believed that imitation is not just a practical exercise but a concern at the heart of human life, that proper poetic imitation follows the spirit of one's model, not just tags, lines, or rhetorical devices, and that imitation must be undertaken with care for the identity and predilections of the imitator. The imitator has first to study diligently in order to understand the forms of his model's soul and the patterns of his thought and expression; only then can he extend these models into a work of

transcending value. It further seems evident that Jonson, carefully honoring his personal integrity, studied Martial until he understood his model well enough to imitate him properly. Following Renaissance commentators and editors, he knew that Martial's epigrams were occasional, approved them as verbal tableaux of human society whose objective is praising good and satirizing evil, and realized that he had to counter the charge of scurrility against them. Jonson understood best of all how Martial's sharp wit and concluding sting unified the moral objectives and formal characteristics of the epigram. As he imitated Martial from this set of understandings he also might outdo him, might sometimes become an over-Martialed Ben by developing the potential in the epigram's identifying feature beyond summation to surprise.

IV

By examining Martial's objectives and the devices he used to gain them, Jonson could have learned to fuse two different formats into one pointed epigram in which tension derives from alternate readings (one of praise, another of blame) depending on how the person addressed behaves. That is, he could invent original expression by imitation. I submit as a speculative example of how he could imitate his original so as to transcend it, one of his fine but neglected epigrams requesting patronage. In "An Epigram. To, William, Earle of Newcastle" (*Under. 55*) Jonson so addresses a notable member of a family renowned for upholding chivalric traditions.

Both Martial and Jonson frequently had to write poetry begging patronage, a degrading exercise for any poet, but a particularly humiliating one for those proud of their contribution to civilization. An obvious way to maintain self-respect, honor a patron, and insult an enemy, would be to write a begging epigram that on some occasion praises the former at the cost of the latter so that it encourages generosity and discourages stinginess or misplaced values that permit subsidizing causes less important than art. A poet can contrast some people's gifts to artists with others' neglect; the juxtaposition itself supplies both the moral thrust and the wit that an epigram requires. In V. xix, for example, Martial praises Domitian for the wonders of his era (and for gifts finally never given), then requests that the emperor grant real patronage instead of the picayune support many of his nobles offered. The concluding twist is that Martial's advice is not only humane, it is also to his own benefit. This

ply Jonson uses in "An Epigram, to the House-hold 1630" (*Under. 70*). He extends that effectiveness in "To Lucy Countesse of Bedford" (*Epig. LXXXIV*). After someone else has rebuffed his request, she grants the favor before he can ask again:

Madame, I told you late how I repented,
I ask'd lord a buck, and he denyed me;
And, ere I could aske you, I was prevented:
For your most noble offer had supply'd me.

He continues by praising her and offering her the poet's gift, immortality. At the same time he is revenged on the lord, just as Martial was on cheap Roman nobility. And he has created epigrammatic tension. Jonson adds a further technique in "To William Earle of Pembroke" (*Epig. CII*), son of the Countess and nephew of Sir Philip Sidney, chief patron and lord to whom he dedicated his *Epigrammes*. Jonson's graceful compliment and thanks demonstrate that one can be at the same time both a model to follow and a reproof to those who don't:

I doe but name thee *Pembroke*, and I find
It is an *Epigramme*, on all man-kind;
Against the bad, but of, and to the good:
Both which are ask'd, to have thee understood.
Nor could the age have mist thee, in this strife
Of vice, and vertue; wherein all great life
Almost, is exercis'd.

Jonson needs only to make his subject potentially the butt as well as the exemplar.

A useful ploy on similar occasions suggests how to condemn and satirize those who have promised but reneged, by leading to a stinging tail that lashes ill behavior. Thus Martial attacks one man for giving less as he gets richer till his suitors hope he will inherit everything and so dwindle to nothing (*I. xcix*, or *c*) or wishes Baccara be struck dumb so he will no longer be able to reiterate his unfulfilled promise, "*Si quid opus fuerit, scis me non esse rogandum*" (*VII. xcii*). It is this form of threat that Jonson follows in "To Fine Grand" (*Epig. LXXIII*). He opens by asking why "Grand" so shuns his company and epigrams, since "The world must know your greatnesse is my debter." Then he itemizes his enemy's debts before he concludes with a threat: "Fortie things more, deare *Grand*, which you know true, / For which, or pay me quickly, or Ile pay you."

Martial adds two final suggestions to Jonson. First, he shows bitterness over the ingratitude of those who disregard the immortality of poetry while they lavish sumptuous clothing on mule skimmers (X. lxxvi), reward jockeys and racehorses with fortunes (X. lxxiv), even have jockeys and horses sculpted in gold (V. xxv). Second, he remarks that a tree in one of his patron's orchards is better off than the poet in his garret (VIII. xiv): "sic habitare iubet veterem crudelis amicum?/arboris ergo tuæ tutior hospes ero." These patterns Jonson at least once unites so as to overgo Martial by his own original and ingenious, entrapping dilemma: if the wouldbe patron supplies the poet's needs, the poem praises; but if he fails, it condemns the misplaced set of values that allow him to ignore art while he squanders wealth elsewhere.

In "To, William, Earle of Newcastle" Jonson, like Sidney in *An Apologie for Poetrie*, starts not with the merits or need for underwriting poetry, his ultimate topic, but instead with a compliment based on horsemanship:

When first my Lord, I saw you backe your horse,
 Provoke his mettall, and command his force
 To all the uses of the field, and race,
 Me thought I read the ancient Art of *Thrace*.

Just as when Jonson compliments Newcastle's valiant handling of arms through pointing to his family's tradition of valor (*Under*. 61), here he continues by granting Newcastle's chivalry a romance as well as a classic heritage, a heritage all the more personal due to his fame as an equestrian who maintained several masters of horsemanship and later published a book based on horsemanship.

Then he establishes his central hinge with a pun that turns the topic towards poetic patronage: "Nay, so your Seate his beauties did endorse,/As I began to wish my selfe a horse." At this turn Jonson hints at the dissatisfaction Martial bequeathed poetic followers, since they and their art are destined a place behind horses, and other pastimes. He compares the care lavished on an animal with the implied disregard of the needs of poets, who sustain humanity:

And surely had I but your Stable seene
 Before: I thinke my wish absolvd had beene.
 For never saw I yet the Muses dwell,
 Nor any of their houshold halfe so well.

Reiterating the final words of the preceding lines, thereby emphasizing his moral stance and calling attention to his request, Jonson

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begins to bring the lesson home through an even greater compliment. After he follows the worn allusion to the Augean stables, he pointedly concludes with a clever sting that links Newcastle's potential grants to him with Caesar's supposed award to Virgil—the pay of a groom:

So well! as when I saw the floore, and Roome
 I look'd for *Hercules* to be the Groome:
 And cri'd, away, with the *Cæsarian* bread,
 At these Immortall Mangers *Virgil* fed.

Jonson's clever conclusion brings about several surprising recognitions. First, the epigram is not merely a compliment, but a compliment written for an occasion requesting patronage. Second, the entire poem may be read two ways, both dependent on the actions of Newcastle. If the earl awards Jonson patronage, then the poem is filled with imperial praise that reenforces the behavior not just of Newcastle but of other potential patrons of the arts, sustainers of civilization and the muses. But if the earl does not, the promised compliments are thereby transformed into Martial's satiric attack on all those who neglect the civilizing arts for dumb animals or other pleasures; the horse is endorsed by an ass. Third, the poet has cleverly maintained his own integrity by praising only good and attacking only evil. At the same time, fourth, he has cleverly trapped the person to whom he addresses his poem into having to choose unequivocally between a good and a foul course of action so that his own moral standing becomes obvious, for all to see and take example from, one way or another. And finally, Jonson appears to have created the form by imitating Martial's soul—his objectives and his formal means—surpassing him by fusing two of his forms into one superlatively witty, scorpion-tailed epigram that meets all the objectives of and counters all the objections to the master. Jonson has become the "very *Hee*" in overplus. Some such practice, I suggest, illustrates Ben Jonson's concept and use of imitation.

WILLIAM MCCARTHY*

Davenant's Prefatory Rhetoric

In the legend that makes up a good part of History of Criticism Sir William Davenant's *Preface to Gondibert* has acquired the role of a forerunner. It marks "a new stage in English literary criticism"; it is "the manifesto of neo-classicism" and "a boldly independent utterance."¹ I shall contend that these descriptions, though of long standing, could not survive an attentive reading of Davenant's text. Without being entirely wrong, they nevertheless misrepresent the text, and they do so in a way common to histories of criticism: they ignore its rhetorical particulars and mistake the topics of Davenant's argument for his argumentative performance. I hope to show that if you do attend to its rhetoric you will find Davenant's preface a more interesting document than these monochromatic descriptions let it appear. For half its length his preface illustrates a burden of modern writers, the need that they have often felt to claim originality.

The preface has two ambitions. Its first is to herald Davenant's heroic poem, *Gondibert*, as an original work. For this purpose Davenant professes to spurn the heroic-poem conventions of his predecessors from Homer through Spenser. It is for this rejection that he has received the title of forerunner, and I do not doubt that he would have preferred being remembered as a forerunner to being what he feared he was, a fag-end latecomer. In one sense, though not the sense that historians have meant to impart by it, the title does fit him. The sense of belatedness from which Davenant

* William McCarthy, an associate Professor of English at Iowa State University, is at work on a study of eighteenth-century critical rhetoric.

¹ Arthur H. Nethercot, *Sir William D'Avenant: Poet Laureate and Playwright-Manager* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1938), p. 241; Alfred Harbage, *Sir William Davenant, Poet-Venturer* (1935; rpt. New York, 1971), p. 197; Clarence DeWitt Thorpe, *The Aesthetic Theory of Thomas Hobbes* (1940; rpt. New York, 1964), p. 171. So also J. E. Spingarn: "Davenant's condemnation of supernatural machinery foreshadows the attitude of the school of Boileau" (*Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908, II, 332); J. W. H. Atkins: "a new chapter was being opened in critical history" (*English Literary Criticism: 17th and 18th Centuries*, London: Methuen, 1951, p. 33, also pp. 34-35); and Davenant's editor, David F. Gladish: "The age of reason had begun..." ("Introduction" to *Gondibert*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p. xi).

suffered has since become endemic among writers: W. J. Bate called it the Burden of the Past, and Harold Bloom dissects it as the Anxiety of Influence.² Davenant is indeed a forerunner of the modern author burdened by the past and anxious about being influenced.

His second aim is to defend poetry as a useful art. The interest of his defense is said to be that it shows the influence of Thomas Hobbes and is the first sign of Hobbes's impact on English critical thought. True, but, again, misleading, if it prompts us to think of Davenant as a passive conduit for the Hobbesian influx. Davenant does show Hobbes's influence—clamorously—but he shows it in the way disciples frequently show their masters' influence: by what looks like unintended parody. Historians too often smooth out the wrinkles of influence relations and give us, in consequence, a simplified critical history. But the wrinkles are there, in Davenant's rhetoric.

When the preface first came out (*A Discourse Upon Gondibert, an Heroick Poem... With an Answer to it by Mr Hobbs*, Paris, 1650) Davenant had not finished *Gondibert*. Three of his projected five books remained to be written; and even the two completed books he withheld, having "resolv'd," he declares, "to hazard the inconvenience which expectation breeds (for divers with no ill satisfaction have had a taste of *Gondibert*)" and stay publication till the poem should be done. As a lampooner wrote at the time, his preface was "A Preface to no Book, a Porch to no house;/Here is the Mountain, but where is the Mouse?"³ The joke about mountain and mouse must have been hard to resist, for Davenant, in whom authorial anxiety took the form of brashness, did design his preface to raise mountains of expectation. This lengthy advertisement for a poem not half written seems to have stirred in his contemporaries not only amusement but also a degree of wonder: Why did he do it? John Aubrey thought that Davenant was simply too fond of *Gondibert*

²W. J. Bate, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970); Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973).

³Preface, Gladish, p. 44; "Upon the Preface," *Certain Verses Written by Severall of the Authors Friends* (a collection of squibs against both *Gondibert* and its preface, 1653), Gladish, p. 273.

Davenant's promise miscarried, for he fell a prisoner of the Commonwealth, which charged him with treason for his activities in behalf of Charles I. Expecting death, he published what he had of *Gondibert* (three books, 1651) and, in a "Postscript," excused himself from writing the rest.

to keep quiet.⁴ Perhaps so; Davenant himself, however, gives a different explanation. Reflecting in his "Postscript" on the boasts his preface had made, Davenant appeals to his reader's conscience "whether [they] be more then such a necessary assurance, as thou hast made to thy self in like Undertakings? For...such inward assurance (me thinks) resembles that forward confidence in Men of Armes, which makes them to proceed in great Enterprise" (Gladish, p. 252). On his own word, Davenant wrote his preface to encourage himself in writing the poem.

If by advertising his as yet unfinished poem Davenant gives himself encouragement to finish it, his proceedings testify generously to the kind of encouragement modern writers have often felt themselves to need. Davenant has been judged a "modern" poet by virtue of his discipleship to the modernist Hobbes: he is a modern perhaps even more by virtue of his feeling about his predecessors and the posture he adopts with respect to them. He feels pre-empted by them. Wishing to write a major poem, he feels his way to it blocked by the achievements of Homer, Virgil, Lucan, Statius, Tasso, probably Ariosto, and Spenser, not to mention (for he refuses, ostentatiously, to mention) their smaller imitators like DuBartas. This sense of having been forestalled is put with classic bluntness by his friend Abraham Cowley, who dealt with it more cautiously than Davenant did, though not more successfully. Speaking of classical myth, and implicitly of the whole matter of epic, Cowley laments that "it is almost impossible to serve up any *new Dish* of that kind.... I do not at all wonder that the old *Poets* made some rich crops out of these grounds.... But what can we expect now, who come a *Gleaning*, not after the first *Reapers*, but after the very *Beggars*?"⁵

Historians, seconding Davenant's own claim, aver that he broke with the heroic-poem conventions of his predecessors, at least in principle. But such "breaks," Professor Bloom reminds us, are never clean, even in poets much stronger than Davenant was; and the same historians also tell that Davenant was "influenced by" or "indebted to" Tasso and Ariosto besides several obscure writers such as Sir Francis Kynaston. Indeed, Davenant's very wish to write a major poem was itself the influence upon him of all his major

⁴ *Aubrey's Brief Lives*, ed. Oliver Lawson Dick (1949; rpt. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1962), p. 87.

⁵ Preface to *Poems* (1656); *Poems*, ed. A. R. Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1905), p. 13.

precursors: in his time and place the aspirant to major poetry aspired to be "another" Homer (or Virgil) just as, a century later, he aspired to be "another" Milton and, a century after that, "another" Wordsworth and, after that, "another" Yeats. Davenant's case illustrates the by now customary dilemma of the writer who, inspired by his predecessors to emulation, nevertheless cannot knowingly do as they did. To write at all, he must persuade at least himself that he is traveling a new road. Claiming originality for *Gondibert* is Davenant's way of assuring himself that he can proceed in his enterprise.

Claiming originality for large undertakings has been an activity common enough among poets to warrant rhetorical study. How is it done? What are its embarrassments? Milton, who lodged his claim successfully, began urging it many years before *Paradise Lost* actually appeared, and when his poem did appear he restrained himself to little more than the one magnificent boast, "Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rime." Cowley, in the *Davideis*, elected to place his claims in footnotes, such as this one:

I am sorry that it is necessary to admonish the most part of *Readers*, that it is not by *negligence* that this verse is so loose, long, and as it were, *Vast*; it is to paint in the number the nature of the thing which it describes, which I would have observed in divers other places of this *Poem*, that else will pass for very careless verses.... This the *Greeks* were not so accurate as to bind themselves to; neither have our *English Poets* observed it, for ought I can find. (Bk. I, n. 25; *Poems*, p. 273)

Cowley's claim to have done something unattempted yet in English rhyme is not only much smaller than Milton's, it is also less forthright. It enters circumspectly as a technical caution, and Cowley claims to regret that he must mention it. In his *Life of Cowley* Samuel Johnson jumped on it, denying the alleged effect. One guesses that what Johnson meant to do thereby was reprove Cowley's vanity, for—and this is the embarrassment to which this rhetoric for claiming originality is subject—it is hard to believe that Cowley really was sorry that he had to admonish readers. On the contrary, he so much wants his innovations to be noticed that he points them out.

Davenant enters his claim in three ways. First, he casts his preface in the form of an epistle "To his much honor'd Friend, M. Hobbs," who is conspicuously thanked for allowing *Gondibert* "a daylie

examination as it was writing" (p. 3). This notifies the reader to expect something decidedly *au courant*, daring, and heady. It would be roughly parallel to a writer's announcement, c. 1920, of a new novel supervised by Sigmund Freud.

Hard upon it comes Davenant's famous critique of his predecessors. Its strategy illustrates the first of Professor Bloom's "revisionary ratios," the *clinamen* or swerve.⁶ Davenant intends to charge his precursors with "Errors" resulting from their imitation of their precursors (ultimately, of Homer), errors which have left the world hardly able to "shew any Heroick Poem, that in a perfect glasse of Nature gives us a familiar and easy view of our selves" (pp. 3, 7). His precursors, that is, are all of them inadequate in precisely the way that *Gondibert*, by implication, will be uniquely adequate. The misreading on which these charges feed is patent, and is so uncommonly perverse that it does deserve to be called original. For to demand that heroic poetry should have given us a *familiar* and *easy* view of ourselves is to demand that it should have been a different kind of poetry entirely, and to promise a poem that shall be at once seriously heroic and familiar is to promise a self-contradiction.

If one attends only to the charges themselves one can come away from this performance with the impression that it was boldly

⁶ "*Clinamen*... is poetic misreading or misprision...; I take the word from Lucretius, where it means a 'swerve' of the atoms so as to make change possible in the universe. A poet swerves away from his precursor, by so reading his precursor's poem as to execute a *clinamen* in relation to it. This appears as a corrective movement in his own poem, which implies that the precursor poem went accurately up to a certain point, but then should have swerved, precisely in the direction that the new poem moves" (*The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 14).

My argument presumes acquaintance, but does not require familiarity, with this work; and likewise with Professor Bate's *The Burden of the Past*. Bate considers his subject historically, documenting the fact that I have described briefly above, that in the 17th century English poets began to feel oppressed by the magnitude of their predecessors' achievements and to question whether anything (and if anything, what?) remained for themselves to achieve. Bloom proceeds psychologically, offering in his six "ratios" a description of the postures that modern (i. e., "post-Enlightenment") poets have adopted in relation to their predecessors. As the later poet struggles to individuate himself, Bloom argues, he misconstrues his precursors' poems. This he does for the very purpose of distinguishing himself, so that he may say, for instance, "You didn't go far enough—you should have meant *this*, which I will now say." (Presumably, however, these misreadings are not conscious misreadings.)

assertive, not to say impudent. Yet when Davenant comes to the point of actually lodging them his courage deserts him, and his execution hesitates and evades.

Homer,... though he seemes to me standing upon the Poets famous hill, like the eminent Sea-marke, by which they have in former ages steer'd; and though he ought not to be remov'd from that eminence, least Posterity should presumptuously mistake their course; yet some (sharply observing how his successors have proceeded no farther than a perfection of imitating him) say, that as Sea-markes are chiefly usefull to Coasters, and serve not those who have the ambition of Discoverers, that love to sayle in untry'd Seas; so he hath rather prov'd a Guide for those, whose satisfy'd witt will not venture beyond the track of others, then to them, who affect a new and remote way of thinking.... (p. 3)

This vacillates noticeably. Homer ought not to be removed, lest we mistake our course; yet only the unambitious follow in his track. Though Davenant is here at his boldest, he still must put the brunt of his metaphor into the mouths of "some," pretending himself to be their mere transcriber—a shift which he adopts throughout.⁷ "But these bold Censurers [of Virgil] are in danger of so many Enemies, as I shall wisely shrink from them" (p. 4). He does not really mean to shrink from them; this is an irony. "And since wee have dar'd to remember those exceptions which the Curious have against [heroic poets], it will not be expected I should forget what is objected against *Spencer*; whose obsolete language wee are constrain'd to mention, though it be grown the most vulgar accusation that is lay'd to his charge" (pp. 6-7). But he is not constrained, except by that constraint which timidity pleads when it wants to get said what it dares not say. Davenant's embarrassment is that he is finding it very hard to attack the greatest names in poetry, for they are names which, after all, he sincerely admires, "Men whose intellectualls were of so great a making,... as perhaps they will in worthy memory outlast, even Makers of Lawes, and Founders of Empires" (p. 6).

⁷It has given rise to divergent interpretations. Atkins supposed that Davenant really did mean only to report other people's objections; Harbage declared that he "casts no aspersion" on his predecessors (*Davenant*, p. 197). But if Davenant is reporting (and, in a sense, he is), he is an intensely *interested* witness whose report is a brief in his own case.

Does it matter that his courage fails his intentions? It should, for in this failure can be seen the distinction between a writer's topics and his performance with them. Here it is a distinction between topic and ethos, and we notice it because they are mismatched: the rhetorical man seems afraid of his own argument. When independence is attributed to Davenant (generally, when any moral character is attributed to any writer), the intention surely is to characterize his performance as a whole, not simply the heads of its argument. Moreover, Davenant's faltering execution of his purpose raises the question whether he really did what historians claim for him. He *meant* to cut himself loose from his predecessors, yes; but did he succeed? So long as a writer's topics are taken for the whole of his utterance, this important question cannot even be asked.

Distinction needs also to be made between topics and the uses to which they are put. Historians have remembered Davenant's critique of his predecessors almost exclusively for its topics, which are these: No great poem can be written today by imitation of our forefathers; the stuff of gods and demons is no longer credible in a serious poem; a heroic poem is a different sort of thing from a history. But Davenant is not treating these topics as theses to be demonstrated; he is not forging weapons but using them. As writers often do (more often than we usually recognize), he is using them somewhat incoherently—or, remembering his purpose, with less integrity than one might wish. We saw that he does not refrain from citing against Spenser an objection which he professes to despise as commonplace. Also commonplace was the objection by which he disposes of Lucan, that Lucan's choice of recent history for his subject made him a mere historian, not a poet (pp. 4-5). Davenant makes it clear at the start that all these poets will be named to be disposed of, and one comes to feel that he seized on topics of objection without much niceness. Consider his proceedings with Statius:

[Statius] follows [Virgil] there also where Nature never comes, even into Heaven, and Hell: and therefore he cannot escape such as approve the wisdom of the best Dramaticks; who in representation of examples, beleieve they prevaile most on our manners when they lay the Scene at home in their owne Country. (p. 5)

Inasmuch as Davenant's chief (implied) claim for *Gondibert* is that it is uniquely familiar and domestic, one would expect him to take great care with this topic. Yet his appeal to the wisdom of the best

dramatics is badly compromised a few pages later (pp. 10-11), when Davenant applauds himself for *not* laying the scene of *Gondibert* "at home in [his] owne Country." Heads I win, tails you lose. My point, however, is not chiefly to tax Davenant with a light rhetorical conscience but rather to suggest how eager he is to clear ground for himself, and how necessary it is to construe his arguments as instruments of that purpose. One of the gadflies in *Certain Verses* caught his drift better than historians have done: "Down go the *Iliads*, down go the *Aeneidos*,/All must give place to the *Gondiber-teidos*" ("Upon the Preface," p. 273).

In the midst of his evasions Davenant sometimes meditates his authorial trouble more candidly. The bragging rhetoric of "Discoverers" and "untry'd Seas" may not convince, but in his reflection on poetic influence he touches briefly the tone of Johnsonian lament:

Tasso's honnour too is cheefly allow'd him, where he most endeavors to make *Virgill* his Patterne: And againe, when we consider from whom *Virgill's* spirit is deriv'd, wee may observe how rarely humane excellence is found; for Heroick Poesy... flow'd but in few, and even those streames descended but from one Grecian Spring; And tis with Originall Poems as with the Originall Peeces of Painters, whose Coppies abate the excessive price of the first Hand. (p. 6)

This is equivocal. If Tasso reaped honor by imitating Virgil, and Virgil by imitating Homer, then imitation would seem to be the path to excellence. Yet Davenant laments that it is so, for he is ridden by fear of being lost in his predecessors. If he must imitate them to earn it, his honor will be not his but theirs, as Tasso's (according to this view) is really Virgil's, and Virgil's Homer's. To want to write a heroic poem at all is, in a sense, to want to be another Homer; but it is Davenant's unhappiness to feel that if he were to be another Homer only Homer would get the credit. The last sentence is odd, something between an insight and a wish. Does the "price" of Homer really fall with each successive "copy"? Yes, in a way: if each new poem is despised as just "warmed-over Homer," Homer's credit sinks too. Yet the brunt of such dispraise falls upon the copy, not the original, and Davenant seems to be uttering a balked imitator's idea of revenge: "If I am to be despised for emulating you, may your fame also fall."

Davenant also evinces the modern writer's anxiety about competitors. As he turns to his objections against Tasso he seems momen-

tarily to regret the need for objections. "*Tasso*, though he came late into the world must have his share in that Criticall warre which never ceases amongst the Learned" (p. 6). And certainly isn't ceasing here, for Davenant prosecutes it as vigorously as—we can guess—he fears it will be prosecuted against him. His regret looks like a passing wish that the war would cease and that one could write without being objected to; but in the main Davenant regards himself as obliged to take part in it. "I observe that Writers have many Enemies," he remarks in his Postscript (p. 252); he must take measures against "that violent envy which assaults all Writers whilst they live" (*Preface*, p. 44). Davenant wrote in contentious times, yet his sense that he is engaged in hostilities is also a symptom of the modern writer's case. A writer who feels that the scope for originality is small perceives himself and other writers as competitors for a scarce commodity (as Cowley put it, the crops have been harvested, and even the very gleanings are all but gone); and to get his share of it he turns to the arts of competition—such arts as advertising his own claims and assaulting those of others, "that Criticall warre which never ceases amongst the Learned." Davenant's critique of his predecessors, with its burden that they were all somehow or other inadequate, is a classic instance of one strategy by which writers have tried to get their claims heard. Perhaps the embarrassments we have seen in his performance are inherent in that strategy.

The claims for *Gondibert* implied by his catalogue of their failings are that it will give "in a perfect glasse of Nature . . . a familiar and easy view of our selves," that it will spurn the supernatural, most of all that it will be radically new, no copy of a copy of a copy. By their nature these claims would have been hard to urge outright, and when Davenant comes to speak of the poem he does not urge them outright.⁸ Instead he details eight features of *Gondibert* and alleges for each some reasons for his choosing it. Following his list of precursorial "Errors," this section has the appearance of a systematic corrective to them. By alleging reasons for his poetic choices Davenant seeks the appearance of having re-thought heroic poetry much as Hobbes was rethinking philosophy.

⁸ See note 9 below. Davenant had not managed even to keep the supernatural quite out of his poem: in Book II (vi. 30) Astragon has a prophetic dream, and in III—written, to be sure, after the *Preface*—*Gondibert* gives his beloved a magic emerald (iv.45f).

The rhetoric here is sometimes that of deduction from first principles: "My Argument I resolv'd should consist of Christian persons; for since Religion doth generally beget, and governe manners, I thought the example of their actions would prevaile most upon our owne, by being deriv'd from the same doctrine and authority" (p. 9); sometimes that of the inductive survey: "I cannot discern by any help from reading, or learned men, ... that any Nation hath in representment of great actions (either by *Heroicks* or *Dramaticks*) digested Story into so pleasant and instructive a method as the English by their *Drama*: and by that regular species... I have drawn the body of an Heroick Poem" (pp. 15-16); and sometimes that of the pithy prudential insight: "As in the choice of time, so of place, I have comply'd with the weaknes of the generality of men; who think the best objects of their owne country so little to the size of those abroad, as if they were shew'd them by the wrong end of a Prospective" (p. 11). Here seems to be a man who is self-possessed, able to foretell the effects of causes (he is Hobbes's Prudent Man), independent of his precursors' authority. What he has done he has done knowingly and deliberately: he can tell you just why he did it.

Working to the same effect is Davenant's denial of inspiration, another moment in his preface that has been taken by historians as the tocsin of neoclassicism in English critical writing.

Yet to such painful Poets [as Davenant is professing to be] some upbraid the want of extemporary fury, or rather *inspiration*; a dangerous word; which many have of late successfully us'd [many Puritan preachers]; and *inspiration* is a spirituall Fitt, deriv'd from the ancient Ethnick Poets, who then, as they were Priests, were Statesmen too, and probably lov'd dominion; and as their well dissembling of inspiration begot them reverence then, equall to that which was paid to Lawes; so these who now professe the same fury, may perhaps by such authentick example pretend authority over the people. (p. 22)

This means to do several things. It advances Davenant's swerve from his predecessors by reducing their claims to reverence, in Hobbist fashion, to low-minded love of power. It builds his character for prudence: he can see through mysteries. It testifies to the heroic poet's proper concern for the political health of his nation (a Royalist, Davenant was sincerely enraged by the Puritan goings-on at home), and it gives that concern, again, the Hobbesian color of prudence.

Having alleged reasons for his choices, Davenant professes to fear that he will "be accus'd of Innovation" (p. 18)—a fear that is transparently at least half a wish. How new his choices actually were has been canvassed by others, and Thomas Rymer's judgment of them seems to stand: "He is for *unbeaten tracks*, and *new wayes of thinking*; but certainly in his *untry'd Seas* he is no great discoverer." In these findings, though, Davenant's case is typical. The cumulative effect of scholars' efforts to document claims of originality is almost to make one doubt that any work, in its tangible particulars, ever was original. The claims themselves remain, though, and a question: How to regard them? When we find that even as he makes his claim the poet is imitating someone else we ought to ponder the disparities. Are poets liars after all? Not exactly; as I have argued with Davenant, the poet's claim may be a necessary self-assurance. Davenant states reasons for his choices in the hope that his poem will thereby be perceived as new—by himself, as well as others. His preface is a document in the history of *claiming* originality. So far as I know, this is a history whose rhetorical side has yet to be written.

The tale of Davenant's struggles against influence is not all told when we have told how he tries to distinguish himself from his precursors. To historians the most important influence on him was not Homer or Tasso or Spenser, but Thomas Hobbes. *Gondibert*

* "Preface" to Rapin's *Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise of Poesie* (1674), Spingarn, II, 168. Historians almost unanimously discern in *Gondibert* the heavy fragrance of French heroic romance (d'Urfé, Scudery, et al.). Gladish is reminded strongly of Ariosto's *Orlando* (p. x); so am I.

Davenant's most specific claim to innovation is his use of five-act drama as a model for epic. This claim Arthur Nethercot has disallowed: "D'Avenant... conveniently forgot to recall that his archrival, Thomas May, in the Preface to his historical epic, *The Reigne of King Henry the Second* [1633],... had maintained that this poem was to resemble a play" (D'Avenant, p. 240n). Richard H. Perkinson found that he also forgot to recall Phineas Fletcher's five-canto *The Apollyonists* (1627) and Sir Francis Kynaston's five-part heroic poem *Leoline and Sydanis* (1642). Perkinson concludes: "Though he dresses up the idea of five-act epic structure as something rather novel, it was not unknown in English literature" ("The Epic in Five Acts," *SP* 43, 1946, 475, 476, and 479).

Finally, Davenant's very preface has been traced to Tasso among others. He follows Tasso's *Discorsi del Poema Eroico* in his choice of Christian characters and remote setting; the *Discorsi*, Spingarn notes (II, 332), had just been translated into French.

seems to have been conceived in conversations with Hobbes, Waller, and Cowley, and most of what historians consider novel in the Preface they ascribe to Hobbes's intellectual stimulation.¹⁰ Rightly so; yet relationships of influence are more tangled than the historian's model of direct transmission allows. Davenant swerves from Hobbes too, even while he is being nearly smothered by him.

In such relationships intellectual indebtedness is only the historian's residue. Try to imagine the discomforts of being in awe of a man twenty years your senior whose mental reach is plainly greater than yours, who is finical, schoolmasterish, and, withal, intellectually aggressive: who means to organize the world in his own way. Certainly the dismal moments in Davenant's preface come from the unhappy side of this relationship: his thanks to Hobbes for correcting *Gondibert*,

by which you have perform'd the just degrees of proceeding with Poets; who during the gayety and wantonnesse of the Muse, are but as children to Philosophers... whose first thoughts (wilde, and roaming farre off) must be brought home, watch'd, and interrogated, and after they are made more regular, be encourag'd and prais'd for doing well. (p. 24)

In a man who aspires to untried seas, this shows much too much relish of pupilage. And it gets worse. "You must be content to be us'd by me, as Princes are by their prefer'd Subjects; who in the very act of taking honor returne it to the Giver; as benefits receav'd by the Creature manifest the power, and redound to the glory of the Creator" (p. 25). Elsewhere Davenant compensates himself for this, though the compensation is unwitting and symptomatic: he allows his definition of *wit* to twist into satire on old men (pp. 19-20). This in turn earned a quietly crushing rebuke from Hobbes. "You discredit all I have sayd before in your commendation, because I am old already" (*Answer*, Gladish, p. 55).

Davenant's defense of poetry, offered as a statement of reasons why any man "stays so long sweating at the fire of Invention," reads like an effort of discipleship; that is, it mimics the teacher, occasionally resists him, and ends as something like a caricature of

¹⁰ See Thorpe, pp. 170-75, and Spingarn, I, xxxiii. Harbage, who wrote avowedly in admiration of Davenant, tried to reverse the relationship: Hobbes, he proposed, was influenced by Davenant (p. 197). Perhaps, a little; but the passages I am about to quote don't sound like it.

him. The mimicry is its most conspicuous trait. Having opined that men write chiefly for fame, Davenant offers a redefinition of *fame* on Hobbes's pattern: "that which is more gravely call'd, a stedly and necessary reputation; and without it, hereditary Power, or acquir'd greatnesse can never quietly governe the World" (p. 26). The reductive redefinition—as in *Leviathan*, Ch. 10, which redefines *honor* as our estimation of someone's power—is a favorite strategy of Hobbes, and Davenant often adopts it (cf. his redefinition of *inspiration*, p. 22). Mimicry approaches unwitting satire in Davenant's attempt to convince all "necessary men" that poetry will help them govern the mob. He divides these men into classes, and after arguing to each class how needful poetry is to its department, he takes three pages to explain that the classes often disagree with one another. For Divines distrust Leaders of Armies, Statesmen, and Ministers of Law; Leaders of Armies distrust Divines, Statesmen, and Ministers of Law; Statesmen distrust Divines, Leaders and Ministers; and Ministers distrust Divines, Leaders, and States men (pp. 34-37). This is the rhetoric of permutations and combinations, favored by Hobbes as an analytical instrument (as in *Leviathan*, Ch. 6, on the combinations of the Passions), but here serving no purpose that could not have been served by the phrase "mutual distrust." The form of Hobbes without the substance, it comes near to mocking his procedure.

C. D. Thorpe remarks that in this defense Davenant is "not only deriving new ideas from Hobbes but learning from him how to throw over old ones the coloring" of Hobbes's thought: he is Hobbesifying, say, Sidney's *Defence* (*The Aesthetic Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 174). Speaking of poetry in the manner he believes Hobbes would use is part of Davenant's swerve from the past. Yet the converse also happens. At times Davenant behaves as if he is defending his profession not by means of Hobbes but *from* him, and at such moments he reverts to the Sidney manner. Nothing could be more traditional than his argument that heroic poetry matters because it has been esteemed by the best men in all ages—here he even recites the standard legends, including the one about Alexander's sparing Thebes (p. 27) by which Milton had clinched his eighth sonnet. Speaking of wit, Davenant achieves a moment of dignity. Wit

is in Divines Humility, Exemplarinesse, and Moderation; in Statesmen Gravity, Vigilance, Benigne Complacency, Secrecy,

Patience, and Dispatch. In Leaders of Armys Valor, Painfulness, Temperance, Bounty, Dexterity in Punishing, and rewarding, and a sacred Certitude of promise. It is in Poets a full comprehension of all recited in all these; and an ability to bring those comprehensions into action, when they shall so farre forget the true measure of what is of greatest consequence to humanity...as to think the delights of greatnesse equall to that of Poesy; or the Chiefs of any Profession more necessary to the World then excellent Poets. (pp. 18-19)

Among the many whom this reproaches, Hobbes—the Hobbes who was writing *Leviathan* and therein setting poetry apart from truth, though not the Hobbes who answered Davenant—should probably be numbered.¹¹

In Davenant's hands, though, the old topic that poetry educates men takes chiefly a "behaviorist" turn: we sometimes feel as if we were reading B. F. Skinner. To those "whose businesse is governing, and the thing to be govern'd is the People," he advises poetry as a "collateral help": "it being no lesse true that during the Dominion of Poesy [in antiquity], a willing and peacefull obedience to Superiors becalm'd the World; then that obedience...is a restraint more needful and advantageous then liberty" (pp. 32, 38, 30). All other agents of government have erred by working only on people's bodies, whereas they ought to work on minds. To be sure, "the Minde can never be constrain'd"; but

it may be gain'd by Persuasion: And since Persuasion is the principall Instrument which can bring to fashion the brittle and mishapen mettall of the Minde, none are so fit aides to this important worke as Poets: whose art is more than any

¹¹ See *Leviathan*, Ch. 8, in which Hobbes assigns to several genres of speech the "intellectual virtues" each requires. Poems require both Judgement and Fancy, "but the Fancy must be more eminent; because they please for the Extravagancy." "In Orations of Prayse, and in Invectives, the Fancy is predominant; because the desigine is not truth, but to Honour or Dishonour" (ed. C. B. Macpherson, Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1968, p. 136).

From *Leviathan*, which in 1650 was occupying Hobbes's main attention, one could get the impression that Hobbes thought poetry almost beneath his notice. A wrong impression: he simply has chosen to think about other things which he considers more important. Naturally his *Answer to Davenant* speaks of poetry much more favorably. It is quite a different sort of document, with a very different rhetorical occasion and purpose.

enabled with a voluntary, and cheerfull assistance of Nature; and whose operations are as resistlesse, secret, easy, and subtle, as is the influence of Planetts. (p. 38)

This, Thorpe observes, "reduces the efficacy of poetry for teaching to something like a phenomenon of natural law" (p. 174)—a natural law which Davenant proposes be harnessed by government. The people need such education, he explains, because "Obedience proceeds from ample consideration, of which knowledge consists; and knowledge will soone put into one Scale the weight of oppression, and in the other, the heavy burden which Disobedience lays on us in the effects of civill War: and then even Tyranny will seem much lighter" (p. 39). The Athenians are cited for their wisdom in spending one-third of their public fund "in Plays and Showes, to divert the People from meeting to consult of their Rulers merit, and the defects of Goverment" (p. 40). With all due allowance for Davenant's sincere Royalism, it is hard not to find this an utterly disagreeable perversion of a noble argument.

Would Hobbes have approved it? Its air of *realpolitik* is obviously imitative of him. In *Leviathan* Hobbes was saying very little about the social use of poetry, which might suggest, to a poet, that he was finding very little social use for it. Davenant evidently meant to extend to poetry the argument that Hobbes was elaborating about religion. By doing so he flatters his master, and perhaps he also hints that the master has overlooked something important.

What Hobbes thought of this performance we do not know: his *Answer* passes it in silence. But we do know what he thought of another passage imitative of him, Davenant's denial of inspiration; of this Hobbes approved, but his approval displays a philosophic fineness that Davenant had quite missed. To justify departure from the custom of invoking a Muse Hobbes observes, first, that the ancient poets were accounted prophets but that their religion is now exploded, and second, with reference to the Civil War, that clergy who call on inspiration only produce discord. So far he and Davenant are in step. But here Davenant had stopped, whereas Hobbes has just warmed up. He is about to make his best point, which he will clinch with a metaphor Swift was to use. "But why a Christian should thinke it an ornament to his Poeme; either to profane the true God, or invoke a false one, I can imagine no cause, but a reasonlesse imitation of custome;...by which a man enabled to speake wisely from the principles of nature, and by his owne meditation, loves rather to be thought to speake by inspiration, like a

Bagpipe." And now the famous sentences, which are meant to prick this Aeolist notion of writing: "Time and education begets experience; Experience begets memory; Memory begets Judgement, and Fancy; Judgement begets the strength and structure; and Fancy begets the ornaments of a Poeme" (*Answer*, pp. 48-49).

This is quietly breathtaking, for what Hobbes means, simply and radically, is that there are no occult agents in poetry: poetry is made by men, in human ways. Of this perennial wisdom Davenant caught but little. Might it be that Hobbes's reputation for critical coarseness—part of it, anyway—has rubbed off on him from his disciple's performance?

By dwelling on Davenant's rhetoric I have dwelt perforce on his muddles, and so I may seem to have meant that historians have over-rated the *Preface to Gondibert*. I do not; I mean that they have oversimplified it. Davenant was no more confused than many another writer: his authorial difficulties claim our interest because they are so recognizable. But in the descriptions of historians they become unrecognizable, and his preface takes on a cartoon-like simplicity that perhaps no serious work has ever really possessed. The late R. S. Crane once offered "a dull receipt"—really, of course, a most incisive one—for making the type of critical *geistesgeschichte* in which the *Preface to Gondibert* can figure as the manifesto of an "ism": briefly, you select from your texts a few prominent passages, such as Davenant's critique of his ancestors; you then substitute them, often in digest form, for the formal and rhetorical particulars that constitute the real text; and you fit these surrogates to an imported pattern, such as "progress from classicism to freedom" or (as with Davenant) "harbingers of new trends."¹² Repeat with fifty or a hundred texts, and you produce not a history but a myth. The names of real writers have become personifications of abstract "forces" and "tendencies." It is especially minor writers like Davenant who most suffer this metamorphosis: they get cited and quoted, but their texts have almost vanished from our view. If we want genuine histories of criticism we need to recover these texts to mind, for, as Crane argued, a history of criticism should be a history of critical writing, and that includes the formal and rhetorical choices and expedients which writers have made and adopted in their efforts to realize their intentions.

¹² "On Writing the History of Criticism in England, 1650-1800," *The Idea of the Humanities, and Other Essays Critical and Historical* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1967), II, 158-60.

FRED G. SEE.

The Text as Mirror: "Sister Carrie" and the Lost Language of the Heart

...one science or another leads into this or that abstraction, and at their remote ends point to what? ...The significance of man? Who will venture to say so? Rather is it not plain that... we stand as ever in the past on the shore of the unknowable, looking out with more of a desire for change, a greater heart-hunger for difference, than for what is now meant by knowledge?

Dreiser, *Dawn*

...our language has no name for such a difference...we would have to look for it in another language, outside the finite system of our language...there is no name for this, not even essence or Being—not even the name "difference," which...continually breaks up in a chain of different substitutions.

Derrida, "Difference"

"That religion which God requires," Jonathan Edwards observed, "...does not consist in weak, dull, and lifeless wouldlings... God, in his Word, greatly insists upon it, that we be in good earnest, fervent in spirit, and our hearts vigorously engaged in religion.... 'Tis such a fervent, vigorous engagedness of the heart in religion, that is the fruit of a real circumcision of the heart, or true regeneration, and that has the promise of life."¹ These holy affections—the Word's exhortation that our zealous and joyful desire should willingly embrace God's manifold intentions—center life for Edwards and illuminate its significance. And God's determinations for the world and His

* Professor See is in the English Department at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

The epigraphs: Theodore Dreiser, *Dawn* (New York: Horace Liveright, Inc., 1931), pages 588-589; Jacques Derrida, "Difference," in *Speech and Phenomena And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), page 159.

¹ Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections, The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, volume 11, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 99.

elect mirror a similar and self-reflexive joy in His own love for the origin of this manifold universe: "If there be many things supposed to be so made and appointed," Edwards says in the *Dissertation Concerning the End for Which God Created The World*, "that, by a constant and eternal motion, they all tend to a certain centre; then it appears that he who made them, and is the cause of their motion, aimed at that centre; that term of their motion, to which they eternally tend, and are eternally, as it were, striving after. And if God be this centre; then God aimed at himself."²

This tendency to follow the heart's motive power toward a self-creating center is characteristic of the American literary mind from the beginning through much of the 19th century. God's Word urges the heart's desire for a new life; all nature follows this current. Scripture molds the heart to God's own pattern. Whatever his differences with Puritan theology, Emerson shared this ecstatic sense of a manifold creation unified by man's engagedness in an original analogy between matter and spirit; and he shared, too, a ravishing desire for spiritual presence. In "Circles" he approvingly quotes Augustine, who "described the nature of God as a circle whose center was everywhere and its circumference nowhere," and in his essay "Love" he suggests how desire may bring man to an understanding of this centering godhead: "Beholding in many souls the traits of the divine beauty, and separating in each soul that which is divine from the taint which it has contracted in the world, the lover ascends to the highest beauty, to love and knowledge of Divinity." Emerson and Edwards, despite their differences, believed in the capacity of desire to awaken man's sense of divine presence in nature, and thus to bring him to a centering and original relationship with essences.

This desire is not only expressed but doubled in language—in the generative capacity of the Word. The language of Edwards and Emerson quickens as it follows their desire to reach a constituting center. The movement of their desire, then, is like the movement of metaphor—an arc that bridges matter and spirit and unifies them in a figure of original unity. Simultaneously cognitive and inspirational, desire and language double what is given to the senses.

² Jonathan Edwards, *A Dissertation Concerning The End For Which God Created The World*, *The Works of President Edwards*, volume 1, eds. Edward Williams and Edward Parsons (London, 1817, reprinted New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), pp. 531-532.

The ramifications of this sort of language were emphasized (as Charles Feidelson has shown) by Horace Bushnell:

I discovered how language built on physical images is itself two stories high, and is, in fact, an outfit for a double range of uses. In one it is literal, naming so many roots, or facts of form; in the other it is figure, figure on figure, clean beyond the dictionaries, for whatever it can properly signify... The second, third, and thirtieth senses of words—all but the physical first sense—belong to the empyrean, and are given, as we see in the prophets, to be inspired by.

An organic relationship between phenomenal and noumenal reality is the basis of this language, which reflects a "Logos" or constituting principle shared by man's cognition and the physical world around him: "The external grammar of the creation answers to the internal grammar of the soul, and becomes its vehicle."³

This language is the agent as well as the twin of man's desire for a center, indeed is itself the process that fulfills his yearning for a manifold as well as a centering universe. "The most original book in the world is the Bible," Emerson had said; "this old collection of the ejaculations of love and dread, of the supreme desires and contritions of men... seems the alphabet of the nations..."⁴ Originating, centering, the sacred pre-text holds all acts of language to its perfect generative model. Desire seems almost to be a metaphor of language, as language is a metaphor of desire, in "Swedenborg": "In the plant, the eye or germinative point opens to a leaf, then to another leaf, with a power of transforming the leaf into radicle, stamen, pistil, petal, bract, sepal, or seed," and so on through the animal world to man where "Nature recites her lesson once more in a higher mood.... Here again is the mystery of generation repeated. In the brain are male and female faculties; here is marriage, here is fruit. And there is no limit to this ascending scale, but series on series." The desire to replicate this order in language is made clear in Emerson's journal, where he wrote, "Ah! that I could reach with my words the force of that rhetoric of things in which the Divine mind is conveyed to me, day by day, in what I call my life."⁵

³ Quoted by Charles Feidelson, Jr., in *Symbolism and American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 152, p. 153.

⁴ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Stephen Whicher (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1957), pp. 139-140.

⁵ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals*, volume V (Boston and New York: Houghton and Mifflin Company, 1911), p. 376.

This metaphoric principle, this doctrine of gestating correspondences, draws matter and spirit together in an ecstatic union. All writing is by the grace of God," Emerson also said, adding, "Give me initiative, spermatric, prophysying, man-making words."⁶

Melville was working on *Moby-Dick* at the same time that Bushnell was composing his treatise on language, however; and only twenty years after Emerson had called for "spermatric, prophysying, man-making words" Hawthorne had finished his last major romance; and romantic language, it could well be argued, was dying if not dead. Certainly the function of analogy in language was already beginning to break down under the self-questioning of a darker romantic impulse. In writing about the originating erotic relationship of *The Marble Faun* (that between Miriam and her shadowy follower), Hawthorne, for example, annulled the intimacy between language and desire. This ambiguous relationship questions the sanctity of the erotic paradigm and clouds all desire expressed by the novel. "In weaving these mysterious utterances into a continuous scene," the narrator says, "we undertake a task resembling in its perplexity that of gathering up and piecing together the fragments of a letter which has been torn and scattered to the winds. Many words of deep significance, many entire sentences, and those possibly the most important ones, have flown too far on the winged breeze to be recovered."⁷ The erotic design of the novel conforms to this pattern of language: whether tragic or merely problematic, it does not conclude so much as end. Hawthorne's metaphor, by associating language and desire under the single sign of a scandalous disruption, the destruction of an erotic text which clearly serves as a model of the Novel itself, functions to deconstruct rather than to incarnate.

It is to this romantic deconstruction of language and desire that we must look for the origin of literary realism, which represents a demystified desire, a world and a language not only manifold but also decentered. The realist novel is predicated on this fragmented language and lost desire—desire lost in the sense that it wanders in the ruins of a language that once bound human passion to the healing logic of a center. The favorite topic of the theologian Dr. Hopkins in Mrs. Stowe's sentimental novel *The Minister's Wooing* (1859) is

⁶ Emerson, *Selected Writings*, pp. 185-186.

⁷ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun: or, The Romance of Monte Beni*, The Centenary Edition, volume IV, eds. William Charvat et. al. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968), pp. 92-93.

"the last golden age of Time, the Marriage-Supper of the Lamb, when the purified Earth, like a repentant Psyche, shall be restored to the long-lost favor of a celestial Bridegroom, and glorified saints and angels shall walk familiarly as wedding guests among men."⁸ Emerson remarked much more concisely in "Love" that "Heaven is not the pairing of two, but the communion of all souls." Though sentimentalized and maudlinized in many 19th century novels, this structure is the same in fiction as in theology or philosophy: "life is but a moment and love is immortal," the heroine of *The Minister's Wooing* comes to realize, as she "seemed, in a shadowy trance, to feel herself and [her lover] past this mortal fane, far over on the shores of that other life, ascending with Christ, all-glorified, all tears wiped away, and with full permission to love and be loved forever" (540-541).

What has been lost thanks to the interpretation of later romantic thought such as Melville's is precisely the capacity of language so readily to constitute a meaningful universe. And man's desire for an essential "truth"—a desire become so elusive a quality that it can only, as Picasso has grotesquely put it, be "attrapé par la queue"⁹—reflects the mendacious metaphoric knowledge which Nietzsche defines as

a mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which become poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage seems to a nation fixed, canonic, and binding: truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they *are* illusions: worn-out metaphors which have become powerless to effect the senses: coins which have their obverse effaced and now are no longer of account as coins but merely as metal.¹⁰

Man's metaphoric inscription on nature, then, has worn away—but it was in any case only a forgery. We might recall here that Melville's

⁸ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Minister's Wooing* (Boston: Brown, Taggard, and Chase, 1859), pp. 203-204. Subsequent references will be given parenthetically in the text.

⁹ The title of Picasso's only play is "Le désir, attrapé par la queue." It appeared in *New World Writing*, volume 11 (New York: The New American Library, 1952), translated by Herma Briffault.

¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Falsity in Their Ultramoral Sense" (1873), *The Complete Works of Nietzsche*, volume 11, ed. D. Levy, Trans. M. A. Mugge (London: 1911), p. 180.

Pierre and Howell's Bartley Hubbard, Hawthorne's Donatello and Frederic's Theron Ware, perhaps most supremely Clemens' Tom Sawyer, show us the extent to which reliance on such "canonic" metaphors as Nietzsche has in mind can be destructive. Desire in the realist novel, to be authentic, must avoid the illusion that experience and essence are metaphorically related. Desire that is free of this illusion arises in "a destructured world which has lost its meaning, a world in which things jut out like fragments of pure matter, like brute qualities."¹¹ And the style of this literary epoch, Roland Barthes has said, has

destroyed relationships in language and reduced discourse to words as static things. This implies a reversal in our knowledge of Nature... initiates a discontinuous Nature, which is revealed only piecemeal... Nature becomes a fragmented space, made of objects solitary and terrible, because the links between them are only potential. Nobody chooses for them a privileged meaning, or a particular use, or some service; nobody imposes a hierarchy on them, nobody reduces them to the manifestation of a mental behavior, or of an intention, of some evidence of tenderness, in short.¹²

Once again language and desire may be seen as analogies of one another, though not as they were for Edwards or Emerson; from systematic metaphors of metaphysical essence, they have been transformed into systematic metaphors of man's alienation in history. The structure of language and the structure of desire may therefore be understood to have changed isomorphically; and a reading of Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* will help to verify this important change.

ii

Late in his life, according to both Robert Elias and F. O. Matthiessen, Theodore Dreiser came hesitatingly to express his desire for an Emersonian ideal of nature. Matthiessen suggests more accurately I think than Elias (to whom he is nonetheless greatly indebted) the

¹¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Citadel Press, 1971), p. 371. All references to Sartre are to this edition and will be given parenthetically in the text.

¹² Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, in *Writing Degree Zero and Elements of Semiology*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), pp. 49-50.

ambivalence of this transcendentalist idea. In his earliest published work, including *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser unremittingly represented man and man's condition in terms that suggest Nietzsche's universe. Matthiessen quotes a typical remark: "As I see him the utterly infinitesimal individual weaves among the mysteries a floss-like and wholly meaningless course—if course it be. In short I catch no meaning from all I have seen, and pass quite as I came, confused and dismayed."¹³

Sister Carrie had been published more than a quarter of a century before Dreiser wrote these words, yet they seem the best place to begin an exploration of the thematics of language and desire in that novel, which initiates a century as well as a career. Language and desire in fact both signify a new episteme by the time Dreiser had, with great difficulty, put his first novel into print. His reading of Herbert Spencer, Dreiser said, "nearly killed me, took every shred of belief away from me; showed me that I was a chemical atom in a whirl of unknown forces."¹⁴ Desire too is a matter of "chemism" for Dreiser; man, he thought, "is a chemic animal, reacting constantly quite as chemical and physical bodies do to laws.... Life and the individual should be judged on their chemical and physical merits and not on some preconceived metaphysical, religious notion or dogma."¹⁵ We might expect Dreiser's thematic of desire, then, and the language that expresses it, to conform to a pluralistic and uncentered universe, constituted by atoms in a "whirl" of energies.

Moreover this language and this desire provide no trace of an extra metaphysical presence beyond the representation of empirical experience. Dreiser's metaphors, when he does use them, do not indicate that language may represent an experience of some order above language which art signifies, and ratifies, as it transcends the senses' limit. Dreiser's language, even his metaphoric language, allows no metaphysical "elsewhere" toward which the reader's desire

¹³ Quoted by F. O. Matthiessen in *Dreiser* (William Sloane Associates, 1951), p. 235. The quotation is identified as a passage in the *Bookman*, September, 1928, by Eliseo Vivas, "Dreiser, an Inconsistent Mechanist," in *The Stature of Theodore Dreiser*, eds. Kazin and Shapiro (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), p. 241.

¹⁴ Quoted by W. A. Swanberg in *Dreiser* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), p. 60.

¹⁵ Quoted by Robert Elias in *Theodore Dreiser: Apostle of Nature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, emended edition, 1970), p. 181.

might urge him. Indeed, from the first sentence of *Sister Carrie* the atomistic aspect of the style, and of a new episteme, is emphasized.

When Caroline Meeber boarded the afternoon train for Chicago, her total outfit consisted of a small trunk, a cheap imitation alligator-skin satchel, a small lunch in a paper box, and a yellow leather snap purse, containing her ticket, a scrap of paper with her sister's address in Van Buren Street, and four dollars in money. It was in August, 1889. She was eighteen years of age, bright, timid, and full of the illusions of ignorance and youth.¹⁶

These images convey to us everything we need to know about Carrie and in fact most of what we are able to discover about her throughout the course of the novel. She is represented as a collection or succession of contiguous images whose meaning rests in their proximity to one another and in their constant repetition. She begins in transit; we encounter her just after the beginning of a journey whose terminus never comes clear. She carries only the signs of the traveller, four concrete images which substantially mark and limit her desire from beginning to end: clothes, food, money, and lodging. Moreover these images are all ephemeral—the lunch and the money are consumed almost at once, her sister's address is obsolete as soon as she moves into Drouet's ménage, the cheap luggage, metaphorically an "imitation," is only a poor sign of the luxury she desires. All these will disappear when her lover purchases replacements for them. And the lover himself will soon enough be replaced. The details that present a concrete picture of Carrie are also the images that limit and analyze her character, and this limit, this analysis, is the fundamental assumption of literary realism: things are significant in themselves, not in their analogy to another order of things that is "elsewhere" than in a specific history. Carrie is only what she appears to be, a figure in transit to nowhere, a passive register of impressions and desires which cannot be sustained outside the senses. What is more, the images that define her disappear as she moves along, only to be repeated, made perhaps more elegant or conspicuous but never more significant: new clothes, richer foods, increasingly comfortable and affluent lodgings. They are limited to

¹⁶ Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (New York: Random House, The Modern Library, 1917), p. 1. Subsequent references will be given parenthetically in the text.

the most basic physical necessities of life, and her characteristic movement through Dreiser's world is summed up by the ticket which she carries, a sign whose meaning is exhausted by the use to which it must be put in order to function. It is there to assure and signify passage, and becomes meaningless—insignificant—once it has identified her as a passenger. It becomes effaced; it neither refers to her past nor points to any meaningful future. Like all the images that define her, its meaning arises out of its own obsolescence. Where a metaphor might compare, and thus detour, these details simply fade. Carrie's representation is never supplemented by an appropriation of anything outside language itself (with one exception, as we shall see).

An object herself, Carrie immediately becomes the focus of forces which continue to work on her throughout the novel. The sentimental co-ordinates that would have guided the heroine of one of Mrs. Stowe's novels remain behind her in Columbia City. With "a gush of tears...a touch in her throat...a pathetic sigh" (1) she gives up the reverie of sentiment as she passes from a now irretrievable pastoral origin to the city. Only the merest iconographic fragments survive in the tears and the sigh. Leaving this context and its idealizing language behind, she enters a new dimension, one which Dreiser clarifies by using a metaphor that will also prove to be ephemeral, one which both recalls and exhausts the reverie of an ideal world embodied in language:

The city has its cunning wiles, no less than the infinitely smaller and more human tempter. There are large forces which allure with all the soulfulness of expression possible in the most cultured human...Half the undoing of the unsophisticated and natural mind is accomplished by forces wholly superhuman. A blare of sound, a roar of life, a vast array of human hives, appeal to the astonished senses in equivocal terms. Without a counsellor at hand to whisper cautious interpretations, what falsehoods may not these things breathe into the unguarded ear! Unrecognised for what they are, their beauty, like music, too often relaxes, then weakens, then perverts the simpler human perceptions. (2)

This passage introduces a brief metaphoric construction which Dreiser must have found in some melodramatic seduction. But unlike the metonymic identity of Carrie, which is persistently re-established in the novel's imagery, the suggestion of personification metaphor in

this temptation is instantly deflated, along with the moral code toward which it momentarily detours. Desire for this false beauty does not kindle to be transformed into a sign of man's unregeneracy. It fades only to re-kindle in another object. It is Drouet who commences this sequence of desired objects, and who checks the possibly metaphysical reference as well. To this chaste maiden, this innocent mind leaving the domestic hearth, the "human tempter" at once appears, summoned by the sentimental incantation to breathe corrupt lies into the "unguarded ear":

"That," said a voice in her ear, "is one of the prettiest little resorts in Wisconsin." (3)

So much for the garden and its serpent. We have been asked by the over-blown admonition to anticipate, for a moment, Satan whispering his cosmic lie to Eve. Dreiser seems to be inviting us to expect the conventions and standards of the fiction to which *Sister Carrie* will in fact provide the antidote. But like all apparently moral co-ordinates in the text, this distintegrates under the pressures of a writing that overthrows the sentimental and moral conventions of literature. Drouet is not a vile seducer, his temptations not the "falsehoods" which we have been led to expect by the allusion to a theological, epic, or melodramatic source; he speaks to the language of the senses, but there is nothing else. And his words are of course only a reflection of desires already latent in Carrie, else she would not voluntarily be leaving "one of the prettiest little resorts in Wisconsin" for a new kind of life in Chicago. She becomes aware of "certain features out of the side of her eye. Flush, colourful cheeks, a light moustache, a grey fedora hat" (3) identify Drouet not as the enemy of virtue, since there is now no association (metaphoric or other) with supernatural values, no references to an absolute ethical system. Drouet is identified—once he actually appears in the context of this language—metonymically, as a composite of signs, a character without depth. He is an individual type who stands for an entire class:

His suit was of a striped and crossed pattern of brown wool, new at that time, but since become familiar as a business suit. The low crotch of the vest revealed a stiff shirt bosom of white and pink stripes. From his coat sleeves protruded a pair of linen cuffs of the same pattern, fastened with large, gold plate buttons, set with the common yellow agates known

as "cat's eyes." His fingers bore several rings—one, the ever-enduring heavy seal—and from his vest dangled a neat gold watch chain, from which was suspended the secret insignia of the Order of Elks. The whole suit was rather tight-fitting, and was finished off with heavy-soled tan shoes, highly polished, and the grey fedora hat. (4)

Surely what is being portrayed here is not the cunning tempter of 19th century melodrama, far less his Miltonic prototype. The point is that this conventional association disappears almost as soon as Dreiser has suggested it, along with the atrophied fragments of the sentimental experience of the heart. And once this faint suggestion of a moral dimension to the fiction has been undercut by a language of pure surfaces (which is Dreiser's characteristic discourse), we begin to recognize that we are no longer in a world whose configurations derive from an origin outside of language. This is Drouet's function. He suggests the metaphor of an original temptation which then self-destructs. What remains is a precipitate of desire; and the experiment may be endlessly repeated without any transforming effect. Drouet's banal observation to Carrie begins this process; it makes him no less than a masher but certainly no more than one either. He takes shape before her as he does before the reader, purely as a creation of the senses, an agglomeration of things which have no power to refer us outside of their concrete dimensions. If anything is "revealed" here it is only details of clothing, and the most that is signified is Drouet's membership in a common fraternal organization. If man still has his totems, they are no longer mythic: the riddle of a "secret insignia," a sign containing a mystical reference, points only to a social banality. Our attention, with Carrie's (who has taken all this in with "her first glance"), is limited strictly to a sequence of images whose relation does not express anything but the simplest of empirical dimensions.

The limits beyond which this mode of language cannot go are indicated by its relationships to desire. Hurstwood addresses Carrie more skillfully than Drouet, affects her (or so she believes) more deeply, "exercised an influence over her, sufficient almost to delude her into the belief that she was possessed of a lively passion for him" (222). The letters they exchange give strength and form to this feeling; but the origin of his desire for Carrie is not spontaneous, certainly not metaphysical. It is rather the expression of a self-reflective process, repetitive but uncentering, which Dreiser suggests by describing Hurstwood's use of language:

He was not literary by any means, but experience of the world and his growing affection gave him somewhat of a style. This he exercised at his office desk with perfect deliberation....

....By the natural law which governs all effort, what he wrote reacted upon him. He began to feel those subtleties which he could find words to express. With every expression came increased conception. Those inmost breathings which there found words took hold upon him. He thought Carrie worthy of all the affection he could there express. (158-159)

The apparent freedom of Hurstwood's language to express his desire initiates a cycle of intensification in which feeling is endlessly repeated without transcending the limits of its exercise. By the self-reflexive gesture of his language, Hurstwood creates a hermetically sealed dimension in which desire is secretly stated; within this dimension language and desire reflect one another as in a pair of facing mirrors. But this language is only the imitation of a richer expression of desire whose superficial style Hurstwood has mastered just as Drouet has mastered an imitation of elegance. Hurstwood derives; he cannot originate. The relationship of desire outside this special area of derivation is, and becomes more and more, problematic. The necessity for secrecy, for example, for social silence, suggests that this language is not free to make desire a means of transcendence. It is located in a kind of Sartrean nothingness; Hurstwood's language is what Sartre calls "only a perceptual reference of self to self, of the reflection to the reflecting, of the reflecting to the reflection" (54). He is in fact writing before the mirror of a derived self, and his desire turns inward rather than out toward Carrie. It is almost a soliloquy. Language and desire are thus a means of withdrawal, not of communion, for Hurstwood.

Carrie in turn never penetrates beyond this surface, which articulates her own desire to her. When she is with him she is always overcome by the fashion that she associates with him: "Every hour the kaleidoscope of human affairs threw a new lustre upon something, and there with it became for her the desired—the all. Another shift of the box, and some other had become the beautiful, the perfect" (159). This sums up the limits of Carrie's desire; her sympathy for the desolations of poverty, a side of her character that does not enter into her erotic attractiveness, escapes Hurstwood, who has never so

much as "attempted to analyse the nature of his affection" (160). More than anything else, Hurstwood desires her desire, wishes to feel himself claimed as a necessary detail in Carrie's appropriation of an opulent universe. "What a thing it was," he thinks, "to have her love him, even if it be entangling!" (164). Carrie's desire for him would grant Hurstwood a value that he could otherwise not have. Taken by his family only as the unloved means to objects desired in a wholly impersonal way, Hurstwood is, in fact, as displaced as Carrie. "I want you to send the money I asked for at once," his wife writes, as Hurstwood reads "without a show of feeling"; "'I need it to carry out my plans. You can stay away if you want to. It doesn't matter in the least'" (257). In this relationship desire is inhuman, focussed on objects to the perfect exclusion of personality. And, as Alexandre Kojève has pointed out, "in the relationship between man and woman... Desire is human only if one desires, not the body, but the Desire of the other; if he wants 'to possess' or 'to assimilate' the Desire taken as Desire—that is to say, if he wants to be 'desired' or 'loved,' or, rather, 'recognized' in his human value, in his reality as a human individual."¹⁷ Hurstwood's dilemma is that he is himself incapable of anything but a derived expression of desire, and that Carrie is no more capable of a "human" desire than is his wife. Hurstwood makes, in effect, the same mistake in choosing his mistress that he has made in his choice of a wife; they are in important ways identical, and indicate the flaw in his desire.

It remains, finally, for Ames to recognize and analyze the desire for Desire that makes Carrie's expression so enchanting to audiences and lovers. "'It's a thing the world likes to see,'" he tells her, "'because it's a natural expression of its longing.... Most people are not capable of voicing their feelings. They depend upon others.... One man expresses their desire for them in music; another one in poetry; another one in a play. Sometimes nature does it in a face—it makes the face representative of all desire. That's what has happened in your case'" (537). For a moment, and only thanks to Ames, Carrie glimpses her own desire represented in *Père Goriot*, no doubt by Rastignac, one of Balzac's "young and seeking aspirants" who so touched Dreiser.¹⁸ The novel "was so strong, and Ames's mere

¹⁷ Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, ed. Allan Bloom, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1969), p. 6.

¹⁸ See Dreiser's *A Book About Myself* (New York: Boni and Liveright, Inc., 1922), pp. 411-412.

recommendation had so aroused her interest, that she caught nearly the full sympathetic significance of it. For the first time, it was being borne in upon her how silly and worthless had been her earlier reading, as a whole." But Carrie is not Dreiser. "Becoming wearied, however, she yawned and came to the window, looking out upon the old winding procession of carriages rolling up Fifth Avenue" (548). She cannot sustain Balzac's intense vision. "'How sheepish men look when they fall, don't they?'" her friend Lola observes as they watch the winter storm together (549). Carrie responds "absently" while "At this moment" (551) Hurstwood, fallen himself to such brilliantly rendered depths prepares his suicide. His influence (and Drouet's) is insignificant, it is "explicable alone by the nature of her longings" (556). Ames has pointed the way to a higher desire, but this is in no sense ultimate: "on and on beyond that, if accomplished, would lie others for her." Hers are the "blind strivings of the human heart," the merely repeated desires that can find "neither surfeit nor content." No object of desire is significant; desire alone has a meaning; and the significance of this desire is that it can reach no final goal. Carrie at the end of the novel is no different from Carrie at the beginning, "responding with desire to everything most lovely in life, yet finding herself turned as by a wall" (555).

iii

The association of language and desire in *Sister Carrie*, then, signifies the dispersal of relationships. This metaphor—"as by a wall"—marks an isolation rather than a relationship. The rocking motion with which the novel concludes carries her to a limit, brings her back again, begins once more and repeats the abbreviated arc that marks her captivity and signifies the limit set on her appetites. The metaphor is not a transcending figure, it is language cast up against that wall, thrown back, cast up again, until we begin to suspect that metaphor itself signifies her imprisonment within the restless and circumscribed oscillation of this language and this desire. This is why the images associated with Carrie disappear and re-form just as she replaces her wardrobe or her lodgings with more and more attractive ones. To use Sartre's phrase, this is the ensnarement of the body by the world. Carrie begins to "discover something like a *flesh* of objects... From this point of view, desire is... engulfed in a body that is engulfed in the world" (368). Carrie is defined by objects which are never more than palpable. Like the language which gives them a

momentary appearance, they only underscore the discontinuous status of desire and a metaphysics.

Throughout the novel metaphoric language is incapable of transcending this world to incarnate the noumenal structures which characterized romantic desire. There are times, however, when language, in order to represent problems which determine human behavior, shifts away from the metonymic axis. Any experience that is not sensory seems to bring metaphor with it:

Her heart was troubled by a kind of terror. The fact that she was alone, away from home, rushing into a great sea of life and endeavour, began to tell. (9-10)

Her mind was shaken loose from the little mooring of logic that it had...an anchorless, storm-beaten little craft which could do absolutely nothing but drift. (250)

With her sister she was much alone, a lone figure in a tossing, thoughtless sea. (11)

This metaphoric capacity, which expresses (in this novel) helpless isolation and dread, does no more than set the limits of Carrie's freedom—as metaphor always does here. It is when the security of erotic attachment fades that metaphor becomes necessary to represent Carrie; the closer and denser the press of the senses, the less metaphor is needed. The final stages of Hurstwood's decay, for example, surely the most magnificent passages in the novel, are represented without any emphasis on metaphor. Carrie's uncertainty, on the other hand, is typically expressed metaphorically.

This is worth investigating. When Carrie ceases to be an object of desire, she ceases to exist in any real sense; and the language that describes her opens to a vaguely metaphoric dimension. Though "not enamoured of Drouet," Carrie "would have been utterly wretched in her fear of not gaining his affection, of losing his interest, of being swept away and left without an anchorage" (106). Dreiser repeats the same metaphor so often that one begins to suspect he may well have Locke's figurative language in mind—or more precisely, the relationship in Lockean epistemology between metaphor and the human understanding, which, in Locke, "finally begins to resemble a small boat (to use one of Locke's own metaphors) in an unfathomable and threatening ocean." Such metaphors (and metaphors generally for Locke) "usually convey his ambivalent sense of man's rational

powers. When used to portray limits they often suggest despair."¹⁰ The metaphor marking the limits of knowledge and control for the great empiricist, then, may have been the perfect one for the great realist to adopt: metaphor, the same metaphor in fact, is associated with the movement from sensational knowledge to man's tenuous suspicions of an experience beyond his empirical perception. Metaphor, in other words, is the sign of a failed or limited knowledge.

An evident equation emerges for Carrie, in any case: loss of desire=appearance of the metaphoric function. This is itself an important reversal in fictive language, for 19th century fiction had typically reserved its most important metaphors to represent a desire that expressed or at least interrogated the notion of metaphysical presence. Dreiser thus inverts the paradigm of romantic fiction. Without an erotic liaison the possibility of that desire which makes Carrie's own yearning for things feasible is negated, and her only measure of control dissipates. At such moments she experiences desire as an absence; and the possibility of a metaphysics, otherwise cancelled by the prerogatives of sense, begins to haunt her. And at these moments Dreiser deliberately returns to a derived and obsolete language of origins. Carrie becomes the opposite of the sentimental heroine: losing desire, she loses history, while the sentimental woman, losing desire, risks losing a timeless plenitude.

The appearance of metaphor is thus a reminiscence in bad faith of another order of language, already reduced by Melville (in *The Confidence-Man*, for example) to a fiction. The manifestation of metaphor in Carrie's consciousness is a reference to something already lost to language—to the pastoral order of reality she has left behind in Columbia City: she "half closed her eyes" during the first metaphoric instance I have quoted, "and tried to think it was nothing, that Columbia City was only a little way off" (10). But this metaphoric language, which returns as the sign of something lost, or rather as the sign of "nothing," no longer has the ability to constitute or preserve a unifying desire.

Dreiser seems to be aware of this when he treats the disintegration (under pressure from Hurstwood) of Carrie's liaison with Drouet. Carrie "was getting into deep water. She was letting her few supports float away from her" (131). The instability of her erotic focus is reflected in an ephemeral language:

¹⁰ The observations on Locke are from the unpublished paper of a colleague: "Locke's Use of Metaphor," by Margaret Wooster.

People in general attach too much importance to words. They are under the illusion that talking effects great results. As a matter of fact, words are, as a rule, the shallowest portion of all the argument. They but dimly represent the great surging feelings and desires which lie behind. When the distraction of the tongue is removed, the heart listens.

In this conversation she heard, instead of his words, the voices of the things which he represented. How suave was the counsel of his appearance! How feelingly did his superior state speak for itself! The growing desire he felt for her lay upon her spirit as a gentle hand. She did not need to tremble at all, because it was invisible; she did not need to worry over what other people would say—what she herself would say—because it had no tangibility. She was being pleaded with, persuaded, led into denying old rights and assuming new ones, and yet there were no words to prove it. Such conversation as was indulged in held the same relationship to the actual mental enactments of the twain that the low music of the orchestra does to the dramatic incident which it is used to cover. (130-131)

Here language is displaced altogether; it is a "distraction" that only dimly represents a metaphoric desire which is prior to it in importance and power. And yet this great desire fades even as it is named. The language that gives it form is clearly subordinate to "things," to the metonymic universe which begins to impinge upon a willing Carrie from the moment she leaves her home and a traditional metaphoric vision behind. Though Dreiser describes Hurstwood's desire with a metaphor—it lay upon her spirit "as a gentle hand"—desire itself appropriates, as always in this novel, nothing more than a world of objects. In this conversation the language which speaks to Carrie of desire is that of "the things which [Hurstwood] represented." Nothing else has a clear presence; what is taking place in this language is the sundering of desire and any possible evidence of a metaphysics. Desire "was invisible...had no tangibility," and "there were no words to prove" the erotic courtship.

The language disappears as soon as it is uttered; it is precisely as obsolescent as desire or as the signs that represent Carrie. She is free, as her language is, to make limitless substitutions within the restricted field of an empirical vision—within a vocabulary of things, so to speak, on which the claim of a grammar is faint and rudimentary. In spite of Dreiser's metaphors, which are in any case illusory, the experience

is entirely phenomenal. Language only tints this experience, and nothing remains for Carrie but a vague nostalgia for a sentiment that is all but forgotten. Language now becomes the reflection of a purely temporal reality; it is related only to itself, and not to an order previously inscribed in nature. The play of this finite language is endless, its substitutions (like those of Carrie's desire) inexhaustible. Like the metaphors which describe her insecurity, like the echo of her home in Wisconsin—both memorials to an original reverie—this language fades as it is used: "In presenting itself it becomes effaced; in being sounded it dies away."²⁰

The language of desire no longer functions to transform. It permutes a material world, but it cannot incarnate a spiritual order. This obsolescent desire is what mediates between Carrie and the world she wishes to enter, the walled city, and it is also the force that speaks against the fading conscience which unsuccessfully opposes the fulfillment of her longing. This is made clear in the dialogue which she carries on with herself just after having accepted Drouet as a lover:

Here, then, was Carrie, established in a pleasant fashion, free of certain difficulties which most ominously confronted her, laden with many new ones which were of a mental order, and altogether so turned about in all of her earthly relationships that she might well have been a new and different individual. She looked into her glass and saw a prettier Carrie than she had seen before; she looked into her mind, a mirror prepared of her own and the world's opinions, and saw a worse. Between these two images she wavered, hesitating which to believe. (103)

In this portrait the glass reflects Carrie framed by the physical objects which Drouet has purchased as he has purchased her, objects which claim her desire as he does not: new clothes and a new apartment with a "good Brussels carpet on the floor, rich in dull red and lemon shades, and representing large jardinières filled with gorgeous, impossible flowers" (102). This is the fictive world soon to be epitomized by Jay Gatsby, with his gorgeous pink rag of a suit, his splendid cascading shirts, his swollen, gleaming auto, all the impossible metaphors with which he intends to recapture the lost ideal of desire. In Dreiser's novel, the mental mirror and the carpet

²⁰ Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 154.

are both fictions, "impossible" figures of art framing a symbolic heroine, the heart of the Novel, whose "earthly relationships" are all reversed. Both figures suggest the extent to which representation risks putting itself in jeopardy: what is portrayed becomes impossible by virtue of the metaphors which distort the world of objects, whether flowers in vases or the interiority of a young woman. The mirror of Carrie's mind is in such introspective moments "the labyrinth of ill-logic" (105). This is all that remains of theology, and it "represented the world, her past environment, habit, convention, in a confused way. With it, the voice of the people was truly the voice of God" (103). Like the images in the carpet, this representation is a false one. The mirror is an emblem for the danger of metaphoric writing, of the medium which tends to double the significance of its images and which, therefore, seduces us into a detour around the implacable and dispiriting evidence of the senses. Metaphor is the alibi, the "elsewhere," of the image, the image caught in a mirror world and reflected back without substance. Its suggestion of Logos—"the voice of God"—implies an origin which language can "in fact" never utter, just as a mirror can never verify the substance of its image. These ideal categories, these essences, are now only a confused débris. Carrie's mirror shows us an ideal dimension of language which has been lost, and what remains is a language that can reflect, at most, the fragments of the self.

The degree to which the language of desire has altered becomes clear when we look at another passage from *The Minister's Wooing*, in which Mary Scudder stands "regarding the reflection of herself in the mirror":

Nothing is capable of more ghostly effect than such a silent, lonely contemplation of that mysterious image of ourselves which seems to look out of an infinite depth in the mirror, as if it were our own soul beckoning to us visibly from unknown regions. The face... asks us mysterious questions, and troubles us with the suggestions of our relations to some dim unknown. The sad, blue eyes that gazed into Mary's had that look of... eyes made clairvoyant by "great and critical" sorrow. They seemed to say to her, "Fulfill thy mission; life is made for sacrifices; the flower must fall before the fruit can perfect itself." A vague shuddering of mystery gave intensity to her reverie. It seemed as if those mirror-depths were another world; she heard the far-off dashing of sea-green waves; she felt a yearning

impulse towards that dead soul gone out into the infinite unknown. (410-411)

This is a more complex image than Dreiser's, partly because the development of concrete images into metaphors is a characteristic of Mrs. Stowe's language and not of his. Mrs. Stowe's use of the image is much closer to Hawthorne's, though of course in his style we may already see the difficulty of using this or any other symbol for spiritual reality. In "The Custom House," *The House of the Seven Gables*, "Monsieur du Miroir" and elsewhere Hawthorne's difficulty in using the mirror as a symbol of access to a world of spiritual significance suggests the disjunction between the two orders of reality which his language valiantly attempted to close. Still, the mirror was his favorite device for suggesting ideal or noumenal experience. A famous passage from the *Notebooks* testifies to this: "I am half convinced that the reflection is indeed the reality—the real thing which Nature imperfectly images to our grosser sense. At any rate, the disembodied shadow is nearest to the soul."²¹ Mrs. Stowe is more convinced than this. The "mysterious image" of the self reflected in Mary Scudder's mirror is like the soul made visible—this immanence is the purpose of figurative language for Mrs. Stowe—and expresses our relation to "some dim unknown" which is present in language and in desire. A nearly identical imagery gives depth to Mary's experience as it does not for Carrie. The mirror, in spite of the fact that it isolates the self with itself in both instances, resonates in Mrs. Stowe's novel, draws consciousness toward "another world" and toward the state not only of Mary's soul but toward that of her lover's, whose salvation is in question.

It is perhaps because Mary is so capable of "self-renunciation" (25), because her nature, like Christ's, is given to sacrifice and because she reflects his nature "as in a glass" (354), that she can pass beyond the limitations of the moment or the event to "the good of being in general" (25). What is especially significant about Carrie is that she can do no such thing. Her achievement of the desired object and her pleasure in it only marks a single event along the axis of her experience. The mirror of her conscience, on the other hand, which

²¹Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The American Notebooks*, The Centenary Edition, volume VIII, eds. William Charvat et. al. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1972), p. 360.

is here presented on the verge of that same silence into which romanticism has fallen, proposes an obsolete relationship that Carrie rejects. She opts instead for a structureless, fluxional mode of which her desire is an endless and sourceless condition. Though she hesitates before the mirror, it is not for long. The images in that mirror of metaphor have no real existence and hence cannot serve her. Since they are not immediately present to the senses, they are a kind of non-sense.

Dreiser, then, has used the image of the mirror to sunder the two orders of reality which Mrs. Stowe's mirror brought together. He presents us with the concrete image of Carrie's "glass" and with the mirror in her mind, the latter moribund and the former energized by the infinitely repetitive success of her desire. She is herself an image oscillating between these two reflecting surfaces, one of desire, which manifests an imperative present moment, and the other of "her own and the world's opinions," conventional pieties that neither she nor Dreiser can verify. This schism results from the central problematics of the romantic style: the apparently inevitable drift of language away from that metaphoric union by which a manifold reality could be expressed within a single figure.

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But to return to our beginning: the unifying association of language and desire, lost in *Sister Carrie*, nonetheless functioned in our earlier literature to reconstitute or at least to interpret the metaphoric relationship between object and essence. In *The Minister's Wooing* the effect of desire makes the theological language of Dr. Hopkins, a disciple of Jonathan Edwards, more than dogmatic, and forces him to undergo in his own heart the emotional transformation without which his treatise would be sheerly rational doctrine. This experience of desire, Edwards said, anneals the distinction "between a mere notional understanding, wherein the mind only beholds things in the exercise of a speculative faculty; and the sense of the heart, wherein the mind don't only speculate and behold, but relishes and feels."²² Here the "speculative faculty," the experience of the mirror (*speculum*) in which one sees what is "notional" or sensory, is doubled, indeed transformed, thanks to the heart's desire for

²² Edwards, *Religious Affections*, p. 272. The following references to Edwards are to this edition and will be given parenthetically in the text.

God, which is signified and sealed in the sacrament of marriage. Thanks to the heart (as Edwards observed) "there is given to those that are regenerated, a new supernatural sense, that is as it were a certain divine spiritual taste, which is in its whole nature diverse from any former kinds of sensation in the mind... that something is perceived by a true saint in the exercise of this new sense of mind, in spiritual and divine things, as entirely different from anything that is perceived in them by natural men" (259-260). These speculations, these mirror-reflections, reveal (once divine grace opens the doubled sense of the reflected image) far more than the dimensions and substance of the object. They indicate a perfect metaphysical coalescence of covenanted men, "because holiness must be above all other things agreeable to holiness; for nothing can be more agreeable to any nature than itself; and so the holy nature of God and Christ, and the Word of God, and other divine things, must be above all other things agreeable to the holy nature that is in the saints" (261).

This is the annealing experience that brings about Mary Scudder's "hour of utterance" (365) and fills her with the Logos of prayer. Sentimental literature in fact typically explores the erotic paradigm as a means of bringing the world to its highest significance, uses desire as the locus of significant utterance: the utterance of desire is simultaneous with the realization of a transcendent capacity, with the sense that the material world is a metaphor of spiritual presence and that language must therefore be consecrating. In romantic literature more generally this paradigm is tested and discovered to fail; and this failure of language and desire to transcend empirical limits occasions the romantic quest for the lost center.

This relationship amounts to a structural connection between language and its themes. The ability of desire to mediate between two personalities or two orders of reality is present in fiction together with a metaphoric style; the limitation of desire to reflections of objective reality is present in fiction together with a metonymic style. In *Sister Carrie*, we see desire expressing itself in a language whose range is no more than the assembly of a sheerly material world. In this novel desire gains the images that make up the fictive world to find that they can only be substituted for a vision of themselves in merely more opulent form.

Carrie's consciousness and the language of Dreiser's novel can mirror nothing but the individual isolated amid fragments unrelated in any ontological sense. The mirror of Carrie's "average little

conscience" manages briefly to state her "moral failure" to her, but the sense of hierarchy that it vaguely recalls is never a compelling presence in the novel, and at any rate is always disparaged by Dreiser's commentary. "It was somewhat clear in utterance at first," he recalls, "but never wholly convincing. There was always an answer....she was desireful....The voice of want made answer for her" (104). The voice of want cancels the voice of God; desire effaces law. The loss of this utterance is also the loss of divine presence which American romantic fiction had explored. It corresponds with the use of the theme of desire to limit rather than to transcend; and the simultaneity of these characteristics is not accidental. On the contrary, taken together they indicate a relationship between a thematics of the Novel and the tacit principles by which language assembles.

WILLIAM J. SCHEICK*

The Fourth Dimension in Wells's Novels of the 1920's

Even among the most favorable critics of Wells's work, the fiction of his later years is, save for biographical purposes,¹ generally dismissed or ignored as embarrassingly unworthy of contemporary attention.² The oddness of this recurrent pattern surfaces when one considers that in the prefatory matter to the collected edition (1924-1927) of his works Wells expressed highest regard for several of his later writings and, as well, that *Tono-Bungay* (1909), a favorite with critics, anticipates his later novels in both ideas and manner. Curiously, critics overlook these facts—*curiously*, because defenders of *Tono-Bungay* tend to labor hard on its behalf, tend to advance their case for Wells's conscious artistry in the novel from a defensive posture emanating from the silent or acknowledged belief that virtually everything he wrote after this novel is artistically deficient. Defenders of *Tono-Bungay* struggle with difficulty against debunking commentary on the novel³ because their arguments exist *in vacuo*

* Editor of *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Professor Scheick has published books on Edward Taylor, Jonathan Edwards, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. His annotated bibliography of writings about H. G. Wells is forthcoming.

¹ Typical recent instances of the biographical use of Wells's writings during the Twenties are Lovat Dickson, *H. G. Wells: His Turbulent Life and Times* (New York: Atheneum, 1969); Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, *H. G. Wells: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), pp. 324-359; and Gordon N. Ray, *H. G. Wells and Rebecca West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974). The degree to which this approach to the works can undermine literary criticism can be gauged by Alfred Borrello's bungled *H. G. Wells: Author in Agony* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972) and Robert Bloom's sympathetic but very disappointing *Anatomies of Egotism: A Reading of the Last Novels of H. G. Wells* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977).

² See, for instance, Bernard Bergonzi, *The Early H. G. Wells* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961), p. 22. Warren Wager specifically cites his agreement with Bergonzi on this point in "Art and Thought," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 45 (1969), 695. The attitude is implicit in Bergonzi's *H. G. Wells: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1976).

³ For example, Mark Schorer, "Technique as Discovery" (1948), in *A*

and sometimes are vitiated by latent self-doubts.⁴ Personally, I endorse the critical case for Wells's artistry in *Tono-Bungay*, and several years ago I tried to demonstrate one of its features: Wells's reliance on structuring motifs.⁵ Wells, it is safe to conclude, was an inveterate user of the motif as a unifying device throughout his entire career;⁶ but the observation of this fact, it seems to me now, proves too limited in an assessment of Wells's literary skill. Compared with novels frequently cited as great expressions of literary art, the motifs of Wells's fiction generally remain univalent or, conversely, lack a polyvalent richness—which is to imply, finally, that whereas the recognition of Wells's management of motifs advances the argument for artistic consciousness in his fiction, it does not further that claim very far on behalf of the overall achievement of his art.

A better procedure than such basic formalistic readings lies in a broader approach to Wells's novels, with special emphasis placed upon the relationship between their ideas and their violation of form and attendant exemplification of Wells's search for a revolutionary form. Herbert suggests this approach, failing to realize it fully, when she explains that the narrator of *Tono-Bungay* "requires a new language and a new form for which he can find no models. Thus the essential and unifying form of *Tono-Bungay* becomes that of a search for expression which inheres in the process of composition itself."⁷ This is true, I would contend, not only of *Tono-Bungay* but generally of Wells's fiction after that novel; for nearly throughout his career Wells was a novelist irritated by the limits of the fictional conventions he inherited—such features as narrative structure, character development, and authorial omniscience—and he sought new fictional strategies more appropriate to his social and artistic beliefs.

Grammar of Literary Criticism, ed. Lawrence Sargent Hall (New York: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 374-387.

⁴ See, for instance, Lucille Herbert's thoughtful and useful "*Tono-Bungay*: Tradition and Experiment," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 33 (1972), 154.

⁵ In "The Thing That Is and the Speculative If: The Pattern of Several Motifs in Three Novels by H. G. Wells," *English Literature in Transition*, 11 (1968), 67-78.

⁶ See, for example, Kenneth B. Newell, *Structure in Four Novels by H. G. Wells* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968): and my "Reality and the Word: The Last Books of H. G. Wells," *English Literature in Transition*, 12 (1969), 151-154; "If Not a Window, at Least a Peephole," *English Literature in Transition*, 13 (1970), 86-88.

⁷ Herbert, 142.

Early in his career as a writer the problem was not acute. Then Wells wrote relatively straightforward stories, often with allegorical overtones, emphasizing plot and evincing principally Swiftian and Dickensian influences. Certainly he demonstrated some originality in these works as well as revealed a knack for imitating successful literary techniques. This latter talent became particularly apparent in satiric or parodic treatments of specific sources as well as in deliberate distortions or inversions of various conventions of the Victorian novel. Recently, for instance, Max Webb has remarked Wells's management, in *Tono-Bungay*, of a recurrent fictional preoccupation with the search for a father, concluding that "in his attempt to convey the disorder of post-Victorian English, Wells replaced the discovery of a father with the hero's more pessimistic discovery of his essential rootlessness."⁸ Actually, Wells experimented with such conventions even earlier, and *In the Days of the Comet* (1906) reveals an instructive bifurcation: whereas, as William Bellamy has insightfully observed, the first half of the work recalls the Victorian suspense novel, the second half fails to fulfill the reader's expectations, forcing him "into an analytic mode in the very act of processing his own 'literary' reactions, his fictional disappointments."⁹ *The History of Mr. Polly* (1910), we now know, uses art to question art, specifically to explore the consequences of the aesthetic impulse.¹⁰ And *Bealby* (1915), to cite but one more illustration, is little more than an exuberant inversion of certain conventions exhibited in Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (1771). Although to date the subject has been approached only parenthetically and piecemeal, Wells's management of literary conventions is a very illuminating feature of his aesthetic purpose and of his artistic achievement; it remains an area in sore need of further investigation.

Apparently never wholly satisfied with mere imitation, Wells preferred parody, distortion and satire. Initially his antagonism to established literary conventions may have originated from a youthful impulse to treat the "sacred" givens of Victorian fiction sacrilegiously, from a characteristically Wellsian craving for something different;

⁸ "The Missing Father and the Theme of Alienation in H. G. Wells's *Tono-Bungay*," *English Literature in Transition*, 18 (1975), 246.

⁹ *The Novels of Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy: 1890-1910* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971).

¹⁰ Lawrence Jay Dessner, "H. G. Wells, *Mr. Polly*, and the Uses of Art," *English Literature in Transition*, 16 (1973), 121-134.

but as his career took shape, I believe, he became increasingly sensitive to the inappropriateness of the prevalent conventions of the novel to the ideas he wished to express through the vehicle of fiction. This awareness, however developmental it may or may not have been, resulted in a search for form, and this search channeled and intensified Wells's artistic sensibility as well as ultimately embodied his artistic accomplishment.

In *the Days of the Comet*, through *Tono-Bungay*, to *Bealby* delineates the decade during which Wells's consciousness as a literary artist became pronounced, especially regarding the management of fictional conventions and of reader expectations. The works of the preceding years, however beloved by most of Wells's critics, seem more casual in contrast; and significantly these years climax with the publication of *Kipps* (1905) with its conventional Victorian plot-structure.¹¹ Though Wells's fiction or, for that matter, his artistic self-awareness never developed along any neatly linear sequence, there was progress which attained something of a peak around 1915, the year *Bealby* was followed by *Boon* with its merciless attack on and parody of Henry James's novels. The controversy between Wells and James is well known, and I do not wish to rehearse the details here.¹² What is important to recall, for my purposes, is Wells's disparagement of James's alleged total preoccupation with form and unity in fiction. "If the novel is to follow life it must be various and discursive," Wells proclaims in *Boon*, "life is diversity and entertainment, not completeness and satisfaction."¹³

By 1915, the discursive novel had become Well's *métier*; even as early as 1911, he had specifically praised Laurence Sterne as "the subtlest and greatest artist—I lay great stress upon that word artist—that Great Britain has ever produced in all that is essentially the novel."¹⁴ The discursive mode, however, does not, even when used to reply to Jamesian aesthetics, necessarily imply a lack of form or

¹¹ The conventionality of the novel is remarked by Patrick Parrinder, *H. G. Wells* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1970), pp. 87-102.

¹² See, especially, *Henry James and H. G. Wells*, ed. by Leon Edel and Gordon N. Ray (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1958).

¹³ *Boon, the Mind of the Race, the Wild Asses of the Devil, and the Last Trump* (New York: Doran, 1915), p. 106.

¹⁴ "The Contemporary Novel," *The Works of H. G. Wells* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1925), 9: 364. Hereinafter this Atlantic Edition is referred to as *Works*.

of unity; and Wells's use of the motif, his personal admission to having relied upon "types and symbols,"¹⁵ among other evidence, attest to the fact that his discursive fiction evinces a certain formal coherence. The central question plaguing Wells by the end of 1915 was: Just *what* form was appropriate to his fictional aims? From 1915 to 1922, he experimented with the Platonic dialogue—a non-fictional form (with tangencies, of course, to the novel proper)—an undertaking which Wells in later years described as "only one of the directions in which I have wandered away from the uncongenial limitations of the novel proper."¹⁶ The results of this adaptation are uneven, and it is after the publication of *The Secret Places of the Heart* (1922) that Wells's career becomes especially interesting concerning his search for form, a search for fictional "space" which is "timely."

Space and time: these emerge as revealing coordinates for Wells's fiction of the Twenties, enabling us to discuss in a new way his aesthetic range during this period.¹⁷ Consider *Men Like Gods* (1923), a story about Mr. Barnstaple's attempt at a secret vacation away from an unstimulating job and a domineering wife, and about his accidental transplantation into another dimension manifesting a possible utopian future of Barnstaple's world. The accident, we are told, resolved Barnstaple's uncertainty over the destination of his trip: "it converted the possible answer to Whither? from a fixed and definite place into what mathematicians call... a locus."¹⁸ This very early suggestion in the novel that fixed space may in fact be less definable and confinable than we, of Barnstaple's world, are inclined to imagine

¹⁵ *Experiment in Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), p. 414.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 420.

¹⁷ The terms *space* and *time*, as Wells and I use them, should not be confused with Joseph Frank's discussion of the spatialization of form in the novel—that is to say, the fixing of the reader's attention to a limited time-area while the time-flow of the narrative is halted. However, his observation that paradoxically a greater degree of time-value accompanies the presentation of three-dimensionality in the plastic arts seems pertinent to Wells's work: *The Widening Gyre: Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1963). Wells's use of the terms approximates Einstein's understanding of them; for the latter see Lincoln Barnett, *The Universe and Dr. Einstein* (New York: New American Library, 1957), pp. 73-78 and Charles Nordmann, *The Tyranny of Time: Einstein or Bergson?* (New York: International Pub., 1925).

¹⁸ *Works*, 28: 9. Page references for subsequent quotations from this edition of the novel are included, with the volume number, parenthetically in the text.

is again stressed later in the work when the narrator remarks, "all the peace and fixity that man has ever known or will ever know is but the smoothness of the face of a torrent that flies along with incredible speed from cataract to cataract"; and, he continues, "time was when men could speak of Terra Firma and feel the earth fixed, adamant beneath their feet. Now they know that it whirls through space eddying about a spinning, blindly driven sun amidst a sheeplike drift of stars" (28: 255). Matter or space, that is to say, may be comprised of length, breadth and width, but, as Serpentine explains to Barnstaple, it undergoes translation, "which translation [is] in fact duration, through a fourth dimension, *time*" (28: 49). Space implies structure, form, order, fixity; time, the fourth dimension of space, implies the "greater" reality of the inherent and seemingly paradoxical fluidity of spatial fixity.

Wells's fascination with the implications of time is evident from the beginning of his career, and in *The Time Machine* (1895) time is treated metaphorically as a dimension open to the imagination and to prophecy.¹⁹ The subject of the interaction between space and time, especially as emphasized in Albert Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity, bears upon Wells's fiction of the Twenties for Wells's aim then was to create a fictional "space" or form which undergoes duration, is synchronically "timely," is relative to the reader—the concern with "timeliness" led Wells to describe his work as journalism. In *Men Like Gods* Utopia, which transcends diachronic determination, encourages the scientist and the artist equally; and, significantly, this place (space) manifesting the fourth dimension (time) is described in terms of books: "it was but one of countless universes that move together in time, that lie against one another, endlessly like the leaves of a book" (28: 323; cf. 28: 308).

Equally pertinent is the Utopians' use of telepathy rather than of words as their primary means of communication. As a consequence of telepathy "they were beautifully unwary in their communications. The ironies, concealments, insincerities, vanities and pretensions of earthly conversation seemed unknown to them. Mr. Barnstaple found this mental nakedness of theirs as sweet and refreshing as the mountain air he was breathing" (28: 95-96). Words, Barnstaple comes to realize, are conventional, diachronic forms, seemingly

¹⁹ See Robert M. Philmus, "The Time Machine; or, the Fourth Dimension as Prophecy," *PMLA*, 84 (1969), 530-535.

fixed forms too restrictive for higher modes of thought, understanding and communication beyond the current level of his world. When, late in the novel, Barnstaple thinks, "What was the use of words?" (28: 307), he expresses overtly Wells's prevalent irritation in the work over the limits of language, specifically over the "uncongenial limitations" of fictional language or convention. Wells desired a telepathic art, a synchronic literary form with a fourth dimension converting imagination and prophecy into "timely" reality. Ideally, Wells suggests, fiction would be comprised of form (literary space) transformed by its timeliness or relevance to the reader. The reflection of this search for a "higher," more telepathic mode of form discloses an artistic dimension of *Men Like Gods*.

It cannot be satisfactorily argued, I think, that *Men Like Gods* succeeds in meeting Wells's design; the book states rather than transforms or resolves the problem. Yet, in reflecting a desire for, as it were, a utopian form the book discloses an artistic sensibility and vitality more effectively realized in Wells's subsequent works during the Twenties. In *Men Like Gods* Wells tried to broaden the range of the genre of fiction by relying on, at least from his point of view, a non-fictional vehicle for his model. *Men Like Gods* represents an advanced version of *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), replete with references to pilgrims visiting Utopia, to a Valley of Rest, to Maidenhead Road in Slough, to Quarantine Crag, and so forth. Wells's novel, like its prototype, begins with a conversion experience; but actually Wells's work commences where Bunyan's book ends, for Barnstaple suddenly finds himself transplanted from Slough to Utopia, an edenic, heavenly "world of real happiness and order" (28: 225) where he pilgrimlike participates in an educational progress toward self-awareness. Wells manages his adaptation well, even furnishing humorous inversions—for example, having a priest from Barnstaple's world function as Temptation. The important feature to observe, however, is Wells's attempt to utilize what he perceived as a non-fictional form or, at least, a model bearing marginally on the genre of fiction in order to transcend the limits of the novel of his day. Adapting Bunyan's work permitted the preservation of the free picaresque manner so favored by Wells and, at the same time, provided a didactic vehicle, attendant with certain audience expectations, by means of which Wells tried to move beyond the confining form and manner of fictional conventions. In a sense, we might say, Wells saw Bunyan's allegorical model (albeit conventional in its kind) as at once timeless and

timely, as a work evincing a form made plastic by duration, by its ability to involve the reader in a "timely" imaginative, prophetic message about a "higher" reality informed by the fourth dimension.

We might pause for a moment, before examining Wells's other novels during the Twenties, to consider a suggestive implication of his reliance on Bunyan's book. That Wells in this instance had a specific source in mind is not surprising when one considers, as we mentioned earlier, this prevalent pattern throughout his career; by the 1920's, however, this mannerism had taken on greater significance in Wells's artistry. To measure this importance it is instructive to observe a current trend in fiction, the so-called literature-of-exhaustion movement, which includes, among others, Borges, Nabokov, Calvino, Barth, Pynchon and Barthelme. These writers, it has been argued, pretend that it is nearly impossible to write original fiction and so they write about the exhausted state of literature, thereby paradoxically creating something. They are novelists in search of form and, frequently, they turn to non-fiction (history, biography, literary analysis, social and political narrative), to poetry, to fairy tales and the like in order to find vehicles through which to convey their new subject matter and through which to derive techniques for transcending the extant exhausted modes of fiction.²⁰ This approach to the novel precisely defines what Wells was attempting, more seriously and with greater artistic awareness than ever before in his career, during the Twenties (which fact, incidentally, ought to alert critics of the literature-of-exhaustion movement to be more cautious when generalizing about it). That Wells anticipated this later development is less surprising when one remembers that he also forecast and to a degree practised what is currently termed the New Journalism (i. e., the "timely" journalist becomes a surrogate for the relevant novelist).²¹

In his next novel, *The Dream* (1924), Wells sought to wed the dialogue novel with which he had experimented earlier and a very commonplace plot. By fashioning a narrative frame disparate from

²⁰ See, for example, John O. Stark, "Borges" 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius' and Nabokov's *Pale Fire: Literature of Exhaustion*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 14 (1972), 139-145; and his *The Literature of Exhaustion: Borges, Nabokov, and Barth* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1974).

²¹ On Wells and the New Journalism, see Richard Hauer Costa, "Edwardian Intimations of the Shape of Fiction to Come: Mr. Britling/Job Huss as Wellsian Central Intelligences," *English Literature in Transition*, 18 (1975), 229-242. Cf. John Hollowell, *Fact and Fiction: The New Journalism and the Nonfiction Novel* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977).

that usually associated with the essentially Victorian story presented within the frame, Wells apparently intended to create an incongruity dramatizing the inadequacy of contemporary fiction as well as of the contemporary life it both reflected and reinforced. *The Dream* is a novel of antipodes tenuously held together in dynamic tension. Early in the novel, Sarnac, the Utopian citizen narrating his dream of having lived centuries ago in the Days of Confusion (*The Dream* is *Men Like Gods* told from the other side), indicates a central bifurcation in the work when he says, "I am still half Harry Mortimer Smith and only half myself. I am still not only in memory but half in feeling also that young English barbarian in the Age of Confusion. And yet all the time I am looking at my story from our point of view and telling it in Sarnac's voice."²² A tension, in short, exists between the realm of sensation or the past (the plot of the novel) and the realm of mind or the future (the frame of the novel).

The disparity between Sarnac's enlightened voice (the frame) and Smith's muddled life (the story) surfaces whenever the novel alternates, without transition, between a straightforward seriousness and an undercutting satiric tone. This tension persists in various ways until the very conclusion of the work, where the reader's sense of reality, of comfort, is assaulted one last time when Sarnac asserts, "It was a life...and it was a dream, a dream within this life; and this life too is a dream" (28: 653). Throughout the novel the apparently fixed nature of the story (Smith's life) is made uncertain by the influx of the fourth dimension (Sarnac's Utopia); as its coordinates lose specified fixity in space, the reality of the plot is transformed into the "greater" reality of a story unmoored by and seen through time.

The Dream was designed to counter the novels Wells thought prevailed during the early part of the twentieth century, novels telling "people what their minds were prepared to receive, searching for what it should tell rather in the mind and expectation of the hearer or reader—who was the person who paid—than in the unendowed wildernesses of reality....the popular literature of the age in which Harry Mortimer Smith was living was more abundant, more cynically insincere, lazy, cheap and empty than anything that the world had ever seen before" (28: 529-530). Arthur Conan Doyle typifies a related problem, Sarnac explains, for his "stories had little of

²² *Works*, 28: 418.

psychology in them; he tangled a skein of clews in order to disentangle it again, and his readers forgot the interest of the problem in the interest of the puzzle" (28: 531). Even though a puzzle is unfolded in Sarnac's narrative, *The Dream* never loses sight of the problem because the frame of the puzzle (Sarnac's voice) vies with the story (Smith's life) for our attention; we are, as it were, eavesdroppers listening to a narrative disclosed piecemeal yet framed for a Utopian audience appreciative of a "larger" sense of reality (the fourth dimension) than we are capable of apprehending.

We might mention, at this juncture in our discussion, a remark Wells made in his autobiography. Before the twentieth century, Wells explains, there seemed to be an "apparently permanent frame" of values governing life and fiction; but during the twentieth century, "through a new instability, the splintering frame began to get into the picture," and, he continues, "I suppose for a time I was the outstanding instance among writers of fiction in English of the frame getting into the picture."²³ The artistic management of tension or bifurcation in *The Dream* keeps the puzzle intimately related to the problem, the context intimately related to even while vying with the frame, just as reality and dream become for Sarnac as interwoven as space and time. The fourth dimension of *The Dream* emanates from the reader's experience of the novel's (Hegelian) concern with the antagonism as well as the paradoxically organic relation between fixity and fluidity, past and future, space and time, reality and dream, story and frame—all embedded in an account, vacillating between earnestness and satire, by a narrator divided between memories based on sensation and perceptions based on reason.

In *Christina Alberta's Father* (1925) Wells's search for an appropriate fictional form resulted in a similar, if somewhat more advanced strategy. This novel is narrated from an omniscient point of view, which certainly is not in itself unusual for Wells; but in this work the narrator intrudes in unusual ways, deliberately drawing attention to himself so as to splinter the narrative frame, to weaken our confidence in the narrator's control, and to prevent us from a comfortable or total submergence into the mere story of Albert Preamby's belief he is Sargon reborn and of Christina's development of self-awareness. A telling intrusion occurs at the opening of the second chapter, when the narrator entreats us to trust him and to

²³ *Experiment in Autobiography*, p. 417.

fathom the problems subverting his effort to write the novel: "This story, it was clearly explained in the first paragraph of the first chapter, is a story about Mr. Preemby.... That statement has all the value of an ordinary commercial guarantee, and on no account shall we ever wander far from Mr. Preemby."²⁴ Nevertheless, the narrator confesses, Preemby's daughter plays an important part in the story, "and even after it has begun, and while it goes on, and right up to the end, Christina Alberta will continue to intrude" (p. 28). This problem emerges frequently in the work, for instance when we are again reminded that "Christina Alberta has got herself hatched into this story much like a young cuckoo in a wagtail's nest and it is impossible to ignore her" (p. 59). By recurrent suggestions that he is not in control, the narrator disintegrates the very trust he pretends to guarantee and dispels the fictional illusion usually enjoyed by the engaged reader.²⁵

The splintered frame, in other words, enters and distorts the picture, resulting in the reader's uncomfortable self-awareness of the fact that he is reading a work of fiction by an author who is uncomfortably self-conscious; and this self-awareness is stimulated into existence in order to replace the reader's normal expectations and his usual passive disposition while reading with an active engagement, without illusion, in deriving the *meaning* (i. e., experiencing the *duration*) of the story. The fundamental dilemma with which the narrator and the reader must cope, the tug of war between Christina and Preemby, is reflected in the title of the novel, which announces Preemby as the central focus but which attributes identity to him only as Christina's father; and so Christina has challenged Preemby even for the title of *his* book. This sort of self-conscious authorial intrusion upon the conventional perimeter of the post-Victorian novel, we might remark, also characterizes the literature-of-exhaustion movement mentioned earlier; but the importance of Wells's strategy lies in its demonstration of his discontent with the formulae of the novel, of his conscious artistic inventiveness, and of his paradoxical conversion (with Hegelian implications) of his search for form into a dynamic mode of potential form which is

²⁴ *Christina Alberta's Father* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), p. 28. Page references for subsequent quotations from this edition of the novel are included parenthetically in the text.

²⁵ Reader involvement is discussed in Simon O. Lesser's *Fiction and the Unconscious* (New York: Vintage, 1962).

not fixed but is four-dimensional or undergoes duration in that it exists only *in the process* of emerging relative to the reader's perception of it.

As in *The Dream*, apparent antagonism in *Christina Albert's Father* actually points to a larger potential unity, coherence or synthesis in the natural scheme of things. In the sensuous three-dimensional reality of space, "the primary self"—the "instinctive, individual, fearful, greedy, lustful, jealous, self-assertive" feature of humanity (p. 290)—rages rampantly. Because of her youth, Christina lives primarily in space, a creature of the senses and oblivious to time. Her legal father, however, lives in his mind (he thinks he is Sargon) and believes that he travels in time rather than in space (p. 177). Preemby experiences the fourth dimension of reality, space undergoing duration, where "the social self" can emerge, emphasizing "social instincts and dispositions arising out of family life" (p. 290). Because each is polarized, Christina and Preemby seem antagonistic; yet together they represent a bifurcation defining the human psyche, which integrates these two features of the self through some mysterious means beyond human knowledge. Everyone is "a creature in a state of internal conflict, quicker, fiercer mortal instincts at issue with a deeper, calmer, less brightly lit, but finally stronger drive towards immortal purposes" (p. 290). This observation explains the meaning of Preemby's belief that Sargon's blood flows through everyone's veins, that we all descend from Sargon and so are all kings (hence it does not matter who really is Christina's father); and it underscores Christina's education away from total emersion in her "primary self" toward awareness of her "social self" and of the capacity of the human race to evolve "towards synthesis and co-operation" (p. 384).

Of the many strategies Wells employs to subvert reader expectations as elicited by the formulae of fictional conventions, the most fascinating, in terms of his search for form, appears at the end of the novel. The final page of the work focus on Robert Roothing, who has been trying to write a novel throughout the course of Wells's novel. Roothing ruminates on Preemby's death: "It was as though an interesting story had come to an abrupt end in the middle, as though all its concluding chapters had been torn out rudely and unreasonably" (p. 365). After one final effort, Roothing decides to abandon his novel, for he, like Barnstaple in *Men Like Gods*, wonders about the limits of language, especially

since "there is only the world that has been and a world that is to be" (p. 400); that is to say, there is (in implied Hegelian fashion) only process, space undergoing duration, and so no meaningful form (fixed space or fictional convention) feasible. Roothing's problem is, of course, Wells's problem; and typically Wells metamorphoses this very dilemma into a tentative resolution or synthesis. By ending his novel with Roothing's decision to abort a novel, Wells conveys an approximate sense of a conclusion without really ending. Conversely, Roothing's failure points to Wells's deliberate refusal to resolve numerous loose ends in the novel (e. g., Christina's presumably pending marriage); and Roothing's inability to finish his work provides another loose end paradoxically serving as a tentative climax for Wells's novel, which thereby has transcended the limited expectations of readers inured to fictional conventions.

In proper fiction, we are told in Wells's novel, "the love story, the treasure story, the career, getting on, making a fortune, the personal deed and victory, the sacrifices for an individual friend or love or leader; remains no longer the whole of life and sometimes not even the leading interest in life" (p. 385). Indeed *Christina Alberta's Father* denies us the comfort of identifying fully with any of these themes, not only by frustrating our expectation of a conventional conclusion but from the outset by presenting an intrusive narrator who dispels our illusion of reality and so never permits us to become so absorbed in the "puzzle" that we lose sight of the "problem." The reader must, as it were, aid the narrator in the construction of the novel or, at least, consciously share in the problems related to the process of writing it; and the tentative ending, objectified in Roothing's abandonment of his book, provides a last instance of how the reader enters the picture through the splintered frame. In a sense the reader is invited to finish the novel, to attain a more satisfying synthesis in the novel, in his life, and in himself (comprised of a seemingly antagonistic "primary" and "social" self); for, finally, whenever the frame gets into the picture, the distinction between reality and fiction (dream), between life and art, dissolves. Like Roothing, who became involved in Preemby's "sacrifice," puts his writing aside at the end and goes outside, we are invited to move the novel toward a still more synthetic completion by living our lives in society, by contributing to Christina's eventually conscious effort to bring about a greater social synthesis.

Wells maintained, as we noted, that art should follow life, which "is diversity and entertainment, not completion and satisfaction." *Christina Alberta's Father* is a superb realization of Wells's view of the relation between art and life, of how art is drawn from life, progresses toward but ideally never achieves fixed form, as it instructs us on by involving us in the question of how to live. Even as Preemby abruptly dies yet his Sargon spirit is said to be reborn eternally, the emergent form of Wells's book expires prematurely, yet its spirit or timely-timeless principle of animation ideally revives eternally within readers and finds expression in their subsequent life. In striving for form without achieving it, in paradoxically converting the search for form into a tentative emergent form, *Christina Alberta's Father* transcends space (conventional literary form) by existing also in time; its developing form undergoes duration as the reader enters the picture, through the splintered frame, and actualizes (through his life) the novel toward a more synthetic conclusion. This inclusion of the reader's relative potentiality for action manifests the novel's fourth-dimension.

Clearly Wells's manner evinces a feature of dialectical thought, that characteristic whereby, according to Frederic Jameson, "the older mental operation or problem-solving [is placed] in a new and larger context... convert[ing] the problem itself into a solution";²⁶ indeed Marxist critics would find Wells's fiction a rich subject for study. That Wells was conscious of this dialectical feature of his search for form is suggested in *The World of William Clissold: A Novel at a New Angle* (1926), in which Hegelian notions are discussed directly, if somewhat inaccurately.²⁷ In this novel Clissold claims to modify the Hegelian doctrine, "which tells us that the

²⁶ *Marxism and Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 341.

²⁷ Too simply Warren Wager remarks Wells's antagonism toward Hegelian thought in footnote 102 of *H. G. Wells on the World State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 107. Characteristically Wells denounced schools of thought which in fact he used or adapted in his own work: consider, for instance, the observation by Robert Philmus and David Y. Hughes, that, as early as 1891, Wells used the term "opposite idea" to signify "essential complement" rather than "antithesis" (*Early Writings in Science and Science Fiction* by H. G. Wells [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975], pp. 204-205). This is the case as well with George Bernard Shaw, whose work Wells knew and whose late assertions against Hegelian dialectic do not square with the demonstrable influences of Hegel's thought on his work: see Robert F. Whitman, *Shaw and the Play of Ideas* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 119-166.

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Thing-that-is is always shattered at last to make way for a higher synthesis by the Thing-that-it-isn't," to include "the triangularity of human affairs," a triangularity comprised of conservative forces, liberal energy and creative spirit (or, we might say, of thesis, antithesis and catalyst.²⁸ The novel represents Wells's attempt to depict the new interrelationship prophesied in *Christina Alberta's Father*, to convey aesthetically the interaction of space and time in a "synthesis... replacing the scattered autonomous various individualism of the past by a more and more intricate inter-dependent life" (p. 253). This aim underlies the journal format of Clissold's narrative, which intermingles as inextricably as possible the personal details of his life and the political movements, economic forces and social developments of his time. As a *Novel at a New Angle*, the work is designed to assault a reader's expectations, particularly his expectation of accommodation by the narrator and of an easy or relaxed involvement in the illusion of the story. Even the reader's likely objections are anticipated, for instance, when Clementina enters Clissold's study, peripherally reviews what he has written so far and complains that she expected to read something engaging about him rather than something dull about -isms. Clissold irritably dismisses her and then explains to us that no digressions appear in his narrative because the true account of his or of any life must include the story of humanity (biography and autobiography become history; the novelist becomes journalist).

Clissold stresses human progress toward the "synthetic and comprehensive" (p. 88), and his narrative, mimetic of this ongoing development, lacks form or, more accurately, takes on vague shape as his discussion unfolds. Admitting uncertainty as to how to get his book underway, Clissold confesses at one point that he has been "beating about the bush for five sections"; he wonders, consequently, if life's show has any plot and he suspects that we all must improvise a part (pp. 42-43). Finally, however, Clissold asserts a faith in an underlying emergent order in the scheme of things and in all improvised parts; and his narrative reflects his search for an order or form to define and to embody his life's reality as it is manifested in "time and space" (p. 28). The search is crucial for him: "My mind seeks it and needs it; the spectacle remains

²⁸ *The World of William Clissold: A Novel at a New Angle* (New York: Doran, 1926), pp. 170, 329. Page references for subsequent quotations from this edition of the novel are included parenthetically in the text.

incoherent in spite of all my seeking" (p. 43). The prevalent notions of order prove insufficient for Clissold, who believes that forms are simultaneously necessary and restrictive. Space, he is sure, is not "a framework of three dimensions as rectangular as a window sash"; for, as Einstein explained, in time or the fourth dimension "space is bent in some incomprehensible fashion" so that finally space provides "possibly unstable co-ordinates" (p. 52).

Clissold's account, it follows, tries to avoid the misleading "spatial" coordinates of conventional fiction. Because the order underlying the universe remains beyond current human comprehension, Clissold's narrative apprehends this order aesthetically as an emergent potentiality of reality. That "there is order in the universe" (p. 48) is objectified in the novel by the window out of which Clissold frequently looks. When the book opens—the first section is entitled "The Frame of the Picture"—it is November, and so the window is closed; later in the work Spring arrives, and the window is opened, suggesting at that point in the novel Clissold's realization that "the frame of [the] world" presents an order undergoing duration, an order open to the fluidity of time (for flux is universal—a refrain in the novel). So too the narrative frame, such as it is, of Clissold's story exhibits an emerging order or form "bent" by its timeliness, its relativity to the reader.

Two explicit instances of the, so to speak, splintering of the formal narrative frame and of the related violation of reader expectation occur when Clissold thinks, "I may have been created even as I write here, created with the illusion of past memories in my mind. Or the reader may have come into being in the very act of reading this sentence"; and when he refers directly to Wells, "if a character may for once turn on his creator and be frank about him" (pp. 78, 627). At such moments the engaged reader's illusion of reality dissolves and he becomes uncomfortably self-conscious of his role as reader. By asserting his emancipation from his creator and thereby surprising the reader into self-awareness, Clissold transcends the usual boundaries separating life and art, fact and fiction—which is to say that finally the reader is forced "into being" at some level of his perception so as to question reality, to see perhaps beyond the limits of the conventional three-dimensionality of the windowlike fictional frame or of the windowlike frame of his daily life.

Such blurring of "spatial" distinctions, in life as well as in fiction, is a feature of the "timely" aesthetic dimension of Clissold's "living

art" (p. 672) aspiring toward greater synthesis. His artistry contrasts with that of Clementina, whose emphasis on the distinctive self rather than on the social or synthetic self compels her to stifle her latent creativity within (ironically) the prescribed limits of extant poetic forms: "she will not even look at the *framework* in which such things are set and which is continually affecting and determining such things" (p. 194; italics added). Clissold hopes his narrative will serve as a "catalytic agent" (p. 770) among conservative and liberal forces, as an expression of catalytic creative will contributing to human awareness (relativity) and realization of four-dimensionality in life and in art; and, appropriately, the book ends without a conclusion (pp. 756, 781, 786). Clissold dies before he can complete his work, and his brother, who serves as the reader's surrogate, suggests in an epilogue how he and we must "come into being" or awaken to the complex dimensionality of our lives so as to provide, through our thoughts and actions, the *living* completion—the fourth dimension—to the "living art" of Clissold's book.

Wells's search for an appropriate fictional form and his conversion of this search into a tentative, evolving form also characterize *Meanwhile: The Picture of a Lady* (1927), the subtitle of which invites speculation about the book's relation to James's *Portrait of a Lady* (1881, 1908). A careful comparison of the two works would yield a fascinating study—Wells actually rewrites certain scenes from James's novel—but for our immediate purposes the essential observations to make are that obviously his controversy with James still weighed heavily upon Wells's mind in the late Twenties and that this continued sensitivity reinforces an argument for Wells's artistic self-consciousness during this period. Apparently his controversy with James and his drive to demonstrate alternative fictional modes inform Wells's novels during the Twenties, and even in his autobiography (1934) the debate with James finds a prominent place. In *Meanwhile*, Wells refuses to provide a nicely framed *portrait*, with an emphasis on completion or finish arrived at arbitrarily through the artist's egocentric, subjective selectivity of detail; rather, he presents a *picture*, the frame of which (like Clissold's window) does not confine or determine the art work and the subject of which concerns human life in all its photographic reality—including its confusions, its seemingly unaesthetic clutter, and its inconclusiveness. Pictures, in Wells's opinion, evince a higher mode of art than do portraits because they transcend the individual egocentricity of the

artist, who tyrannically seeks to control the flux of reality and of human experience; pictures only suggest the inherent potential order beneath human existence, convey intimations of this latent order aesthetically in an apparent formlessness evolving into form.

Meanwhile describes the burgeoning awareness, in Cynthia and Philip Ryland (wealthy English citizens living in Italy), of their responsibility for other people. Through the catalytic agency of Sempak, who speaks of Einstein's theories about time, the Rylands try to resolve their marital difficulties and, as well, slowly discover their involvement in the English coal-miners' strike and in the rise of Italian Fascism, both described as a civil war.²⁹ All three of these thematic concerns coalesce to objectify the divided nature of or civil war within the human self, and the drama of the novel actually centers on this internal division. But (in Hegelian fashion) latent in the split is its own resolution, with the result that Cynthia's spirituality and Philip's materialism are held together by Sempak's catalytic, integrating mind or will; so that together they demonstrate the triangularity of human relations stressed in *Christina Alberta's Father* and *The World of William Clissold*.

These three characters partake of a drifting, fluid relationship, and appropriately the novel about them conveys an impression of formlessness. When Sempak, who delights in the wild African-looking (picture) edge of the meticulous (portrait) gardens on the Rylands' Italian estate, expresses his doubt that "life has very much use for a perfect thing, for finished grace and beauty, than an artist for his last year's masterpiece" (p. 83), he touches on the aesthetic principle informing *Meanwhile*. This principle is most evident in the dialogue of the novel, for the open-ended and freely-flowing dialogue serves Wells as an aesthetic device including at once a wildness akin to the African-looking part of the estate and an incomprehensible, inherent direction and order. The naturalness of conversation and its implicit emerging order or form (for in the 1920's Wells, like Hegel earlier, believed nature exhibited a transcendent principle of order) are implied when Cynthia contemplates some palm trees: "Each found curved over to its end harmoniously and evenly, so that to follow it was like hearing a long cadence, and the leaflets stood up at the curve and then slanted and each was just the least bit in the world

²⁹ *Meanwhile: The Picture of a Lady* (New York: Doran, 1927), pp. 153, 164. Page references for subsequent quotations from this edition of the novel are included parenthetically in the text.

smaller and slanted the fraction of an inch more steeply than the one below it.... Each played a witty variation on the common theme" (pp. 157-158). Nature and human speech emphasize simultaneously the individual detail and the place of each unique detail in a transcendent whole.

Underlying the frond passage is Wells's notion of Gothic architecture. Very early in the novel a conversation is described as "a cathedral of ideas. A Gothic cathedral. Everything said had a sort of freedom and yet everything belonged" (pp. 23-24). That this style of architecture exemplifies natural or organic artistry is remarked later in the novel when Cynthia describes a steep hillside: "It streams up and up and up, and over it brood the wet black precipices of the mountains, endlessly vertical.... It is like all the Gothic in the world multiplied by ten. It is like listening to some tremendous crescendo" (p. 175). *Meanwhile* is, in these terms, Gothic—a cluster of individual, seemingly incongruous matters held together by some nearly perceptible order of internal relationship.

The novel, like Philip's writing project, "seem[s] to begin at half a dozen places and it is only after a time that one finds that this joins up with that" (p. 196). But they *do* join. *Meanwhile* abounds in fragments: parts of letters, incomplete journal entries, sentences recalled out of context, random thoughts, partial conversations, loose sheets covered with "disconnected sentences" (p. 226); at this or that point, however, the fragments relate, even as unique human individuals belong collectively to a race progressing (in Wells's view) toward unification. The seemingly inchoate fragments of *Meanwhile* actually contribute toward a central theme: the awakening and circuitous transformation of the Rylands in regard to themselves (as individuals and as spouses), to their country, and to mankind. The elements of the novel's surface disorder actually collectively participate in conveying a supra-rational, aesthetic sense of an elusive yet pervading unity; and, unsurprisingly, at the end of the novel Cynthia, who now sees beyond the surface of her husband's infidelity (which incident parallels the miners' alleged infidelity to their country), undergoes a mystical experience revealing a transcendent organizing force in herself and in all of humanity. In short, the "hotch-potch of ideas" (p. 253) constituting the seemingly plotless material of *Meanwhile* builds, as it were, vertically toward a mystical awareness, toward a crescendo similar to that suggested by the Gothic-looking mountain contemplated by Cynthia.

The aesthetic dimension of *Meanwhile* derives from Wells's attempt to create a literary equivalent to Gothic architecture. The appropriateness of the analogy becomes evident when Gothic form is perceived as a molding of space evolving as a temporal experience, as an unrigid form always unfinished and in motion, forever in the act of becoming.³⁰ Like a Gothic edifice, *Meanwhile* combines fragments (of thoughts, conversations and letters) as unique yet organically related variations on a theme; and like a Gothic edifice, *Meanwhile* evinces a growing, developing design, space undergoing duration or time, form in the act of evolving into being. The novel, consequently, remains an incomplete, untidy picture rather than a finished portrait; and the implied inclusion of the reader in the picture intensifies this lack of perfection: "There must be thousands of people...who needed only sufficient stimulation to be released in this fashion from the sort of verbal ankylosis that had kept [Philip] inexpressive" (p. 298). The reader, it follows, should add his expression to the developing Gothic-like "cathedral of ideas" emerging in the novel, the form of which avoids the fixed and confining three-dimensionality of the portrait by continually evolving, without final resolution, through a mysterious integration of the fragments of human temporal reality. The reader should provide his own unique variation on the theme. As we have seen in other novels he wrote during the Twenties, this "timely" involvement of the reader's relativity pinpoints one way Wells splintered the three-dimensional frame of the novel (a *portrait* of fixed space) and achieved a fourth dimension in his fiction (a *picture* of space in time).

Concern with fictional form also characterizes *Mr. Blettsworthy on Rampole Island* (1928), which in later years Wells referred to as "another breach of established literary standards with which, in spite of its very tepid reception, I am mainly content."³¹ Basically the story concerns how Blettsworthy is shipwrecked and then captured by a tribe of cannibals on an island allegorizing England during the Twenties. The novel abounds in echoes from Voltaire's *Candide* (1759), Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851), Conrad's fiction, and perhaps, among others, Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915). Although these

³⁰Dagobert Frey, *Gotik und Renaissance* (Augsburg: Verlag, 1929), p. 75. In his autobiography Wells refers to *Joan and Peter* (1918) "as shamelessly unfinished as a Gothic cathedral" (*Experiment in Autobiography*, p. 420); cf. "The Contemporary Novel," *Works*, 9: 367.

³¹*Experiment in Autobiography*, pp. 421-422.

echoes elicit certain expectations from the reader, in fact Wells, as he had been doing at least since 1906, departs from "established literary standards" by deliberately violating these expectations.

Central to Wells's manner of reversing conventional expectations is the interjection, into the novel's first-person narrative, of modes of writing generally (even if erroneously) considered quite outside the normal perimeter of fictional form. Midway in the book, for example, appears a very long natural history of the Giant Sloth; the manner of the passage derives from scientific and anthropological treatises (here thinly disguised as an allegory on the inertia of all institutions), and it is so dissonant to the narrative technique preceding it that the reader is, as it were, shocked out of any complacently passive or vicarious immersion in the fictive illusion of the story. This "shock" is designed to awaken the reader to the serious "problem" beyond the immediate "puzzle" of the story as well as to the relativity of this serious dimension to the reader's life.

This dislocation in the narrative is adumbrated and succeeded by another fragmenting device, the recurrent instances of amnesia (followed by "awakenings") in the narrator, who indicates from the first that he would like "to subordinate reality to a gracious and ample use of language" (portrait) but that he is "divided against [him]self" and so cannot prevent "great disconnected portions of [him]self" from intruding (picture).³² Blettsworthy is divided between his paternally inherited practical side, which prefers form or order, and his maternally inherited inquisitive side, which prefers unrestricted freedom; and this problem affects him as a writer, for he finds "the technical ingenuities required hampered [his] creative impulse" (p. 36). No wonder, then, that Blettsworthy "warn[s] the reader plainly" that a "certain obscurity and disconnectedness," a "disarrangement of the order of these events in time" characterize his narrative (p. 161). Indeed, his account of how amnesia-inducing accidents undermine his sense of "completest confidence in [him]self, mankind and nature" is told so "disjointedly and amorphously" that the reader's confidence in the details or "the surface of things" in the narrative is shaken (pp. 101-102, 105).

As a novel, *Rampole Island* is at war with itself, its external or surface form (reinforced by echoes from other novels) always under

³² Mr. Blettsworthy on *Rampole Island* (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Company: 1928), pp. 6-7. Page references for subsequent quotations from this edition of the novel are included parenthetically in the text.

assault. Implicit throughout the novel is the deception of superficial fictional conventions, and when Blettsworthy at one point during his misadventures cries out, "My God! ... this isn't like they do it in books" (p. 244), he really expresses Wells's repudiation of those conventional forms of fiction that convey a false sense of order. Something more "formless and indefinite" (p. 266), something more existential lies beneath the seeming solidity of forms in society and in art. Appropriately, the reader finds himself adrift in the novel, even as Blettsworthy floats aimlessly for an indefinite period on the sea (a metaphor in the work for change within formlessness [e. g., p. 154]). In this context *Rampole Island* is, one might say, an anti-novel; it turns on itself by frustrating normal reader expectations during the Twenties in order to reveal "the real world looming through the mists of ... [readers'] illusions" (p. 268), illusions reinforced by pernicious fictional conventions. The dislocations in Wells's novel are designed to awaken the reader out of a trancelike amnesia, out of an illusory fictive existence, through "wakeful hours," to a *growing* awareness (similar to Barnstaple's in *Men Like Gods*) that "the whole universe, and [the reader] with it, had become something different, as if the self [he] had known hitherto had been a dream in a dream world, and this now was reality" (p. 52).

Even as Blettsworthy is divided against himself yet progresses toward synthetic self-awareness and even as the reader is alienated by yet involved in the narrative, the novel remains formless while it imparts a sense of emerging form. The novel plays antithesis to its own thesis, and its developing synthesis is the depiction of formlessness exhibiting a potentiality for form in the act of evolving in time, like a Gothic edifice; for in the sealike rhythm of time "between waking and sleep ... nearly imperceptible distinctions open to abyssal depths, and contrariwise the most disconnected things assume an air of close analogy and vivid logicity" (p. 207). The fragmentation of form which somehow becomes (in implicit Hegelian manner) the basis for an emergent synthetic form as well as the inclusion of the reader in this evolving process define the "timely" or fourth dimension of *Rampole Island*, a novel in which the spatial configurations of fictional conventions undergo the warp of time-ness, as if in it "some sudden twist of time and space" has occurred (p. 165) not only for Blettsworthy but for us as well.

In 1929, Wells published *The King Who Was a King: The Book of a Film*, and although its American edition bore the subtitle

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An Unconventional Novel, in fact the work is not a novel. Even if the film-script dramatizes Wells's discomfort with the limits of fictional form, even if it exhibits a use of *montage* which coalesces moments in time and events in space in such a manner that space is made fluid, the book proves terribly disappointing as a whole. Nevertheless, this experiment did not signal the decline of Wells's inventiveness in creatively managing his search for an appropriate fictional form. During the next decade Wells continued to protest the restraints of fictional formulae as well as to strive for a fourth dimension in his own work; in fact, it is quite likely that *Apropos of Dolores* (1938) represents the crowning achievement of Wells's later career as a writer,³³ an achievement nonetheless dependent on Wells's self-conscious search for fictional form during the Twenties.

Wells's novels during the Twenties, it seems to me, relate instructively to critical commentary on literary art and specifically on the novel as a genre. They raise questions about the critical disposition which has led to the explicit repudiation of discursive, didactic fiction, including Wells's later writings in that mode. At the very least, they alert us to the genuine vitality of the school of "self-conscious fiction"³⁴ well into the twentieth century and to Wells's innovative contributions to that school. Also of interest, Wells's novels during this period might be described as "self-consuming artifacts," for they are exhausted in the conveyance of their effects, they point away from themselves to an affective "something" their emergent forms cannot contain, and they evince a dialectic requiring the reader to discover truth or meaning for himself.³⁵ Moreover, Wells's novels during the Twenties bring serious support to Walter Reed's contention that a poetics of the novel is highly problematic, that "the novel is a type of literature suspicious of its own literariness; it is inherently anti-traditional in its literary code."³⁶

These observations are intended to be suggestive; I do not wish to

³³ See my "The Womb of Time: Spengler's Influence on Wells's *Apropos of Dolores*," *English Literature in Transition*, 18 (1975), 217-228. A lengthy description of this novel appears in Robert Bloom's *Anatomies of Egotism: A Reading of the Last Novels of H. G. Wells*, pp. 114-161.

³⁴ This school is defined in Robert Alter's *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

³⁵ This feature of art is described in Stanley E. Fish's *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

³⁶ "The Problem with a Poetics of the Novel," *Novel*, 9 (1976), 101-113.

distend my essay unduly or to range beyond my own limits. The fact remains, however, that the actual achievement of Wells's fiction during the Twenties requires, in all fairness and intelligence, a broader critical sensibility than has been evinced on its behalf to date. The art he practiced may or may not be great, depending on what critical predilections one expresses when defining *great*, but it is art and it is of a higher order of art than we have tended to realize. Uneasy with his aesthetic sensibility and in search of a fictional form appropriate to his ideas, Wells artistically attempted to transform the limits of conventional fiction as well as his own search for a new form into an emergent form. He endeavored to subject the spatial norms of exhausted fictional forms to the warp of timeliness (human relativity) in order to derive four-dimensional novels evincing a tentative, potential form in the very process of evolving.

Book Reviews

The Analogy of "The Faerie Queene" by James Nohrnberg. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976. Pp. xxi + 802. \$40.00.

The most immediately visible fact about this book is its bulk: 791 text pages, plus apparatus and an "Analytical Table of Contents." The largest number of these pages is devoted to the first of three projects proposed by the author: a comprehensive collection of "external" analogues for the episodes, characters, and icons of *The Faerie Queene*. In addition, Nohrnberg develops a theory of "internal" or structural analogues among the various books of the poem; and finally, he attempts to interpret the titular virtues in terms of Erik Erikson's conceptual framework—"character strengths and... their psychogenesis"—in *Childhood and Society*. The last is the least convincing and significant aspect of the book, and even the author seems half-hearted about pushing it; Eriksonian interludes become scarcer as the argument moves into its later stages. The book is something of a dragon—at any rate, a hybrid beast, which employs and demands of its readers several different interpretive strategies.

It is offered as "a critically unified commentary," and this generic description should be taken seriously. The resemblance to medieval biblical commentaries is not casual. Like them, it has encyclopedic ambitions; like them, it is doggedly analytic, shredding the text into atoms impregnated with meaning; like them, it regards the familiarity of a reference as a positive recommendation; like them, it favors the proliferation of often identical instances. Nohrnberg, a latter-day Bede or Rhabanus Maurus, sweeps into his capacious tome the discoveries of his predecessors, while adding many new ones of his own. Or perhaps the model is the Janus of the emblem-books: "he surveys what is past so that he may take in hand what remains to do with greater heed." Thus the opening chapter consists of "Essays on the Plan of the Poem" which, updated and provided with modish titles, re-work the subjects embalmed in the Appendices of the *Variorum*: the generic claims of epic and romance, the use of Arthurian materials, the choice and order of the virtues. There follow groups of "essays" on each of the books of *The Faerie Queene*.

For one scholar to attempt a commentary of this comprehensiveness is awe-inspiring, even heroic; and like most heroic enterprises, it can also look foolhardy. Actually to make one's way through these 800 pages is an enervating, indeed unnerving ordeal, and one which probably does little service to Spenser's poem. The place for detailed "commentary" is, surely, in annotation rather than in continuous discourse. This would, of course, require a new version of the *Variorum*, and one can see how a scholar of Nohrnberg's learning and resourcefulness could have been tempted to make the effort singlehanded; but the temptation ought probably to have been resisted. The reasons why this is so deserve closer inspection, since they are related to the kind of

reading solicited by all the great encyclopedic works of the Middle Ages and Renaissance which locate themselves firmly in an intellectual and literary tradition. The past few generations of scholars have illuminated the demands made by such works, much as the members of the Warburg school did for the fine arts, and have established a set of assumptions now almost universally accepted. Nohnberg's book is, depending upon one's point of view, an apotheosis or a *reductio ad absurdum* of this scholarly tradition.

Here is a mid-nineteenth-century reading of *The Faerie Queene*.

Spenser seems to have been sometimes deficient in one attribute of a great poet, the continual reference to the truth of nature, so that his fictions should be always such as might exist on the given conditions. This arises... from copying his predecessors too much in description, not suffering his own good sense to correct their deviations from truth.

Hallam's example is the tree catalogue of the first canto:

Every one knows that a natural forest never contains such a variety of species; nor indeed could such a medley as Spenser, treading in the steps of Ovid, has brought together from all soils and climates, exist long if planted by the hand of man.

The historicism of our age has led us back to a stress on "authority" over "experience," Ovid over "nature," which is almost certainly closer to the point of view of Spenser and his contemporaries. It would be idle to deny that we have made real progress in reading this poem; the fact that Hallam's remarks can no longer be taken seriously is to our credit. There remain, however, some unsolved problems arising from the new historicism that is enshrined in Nohnberg's book.

Spenser scholars abandoned fairly early the search for specific sources, realizing that his imagination epitomized the hospitable, eclectic, syncretistic intellectual habits of his age. So we now construct "contexts" of allusiveness around the events, personages, and icons of his poem. Nohnberg's contexts are the most comprehensively wide-ranging that any scholar has yet provided; but they are offered without adequate directions as to how we can best use them in reading *The Faerie Queene*. Nohnberg's failure in this respect is not peculiar to him, but it is especially noticeable because his book's supply of references is so inexhaustible. If this volume represents some sort of end, then an awareness of how it comes to grief may be helpful in charting the next stages of critical attention to Spenser.

The very terms Nohnberg uses betray the bluntness of his speculative instruments, beginning with the key word of the title. "Analogy" must cover a multitude of phenomena in the poem itself. The definite article is inappropriate; analogies exist everywhere in the poem's fabric, but they do not always work in the same way, nor is the meaning they import into it always to be identically described. Failure to analyze the concept of "analogy" leads to a blurring of focus and often to the construction of "contexts" that are unnecessary. The most important thing about analogy is that it is not identity. Analogies obtain between two or more items (a fact, incidentally, which makes a nonsense of Nohnberg's title), and we are expected to note differences as well as the

similarity upon which any given analogy is based. But Nohnberg does not distinguish among the bases of his analogies, nor does he notice the distinctions which make them interesting. Thus: "A comparison between Amoret and Florimell seems obvious enough at the end of the two books [III and IV], and there is clearly an analogy between their perils in the seventh cantos as well." Nohnberg goes on to indicate structural similarities between the adventures of these two characters. But he never pauses over the fact that Amoret and Florimell are different *kinds* of allegorical beings and that Spenser, in structuring their life-histories similarly, is pointing to congruences between different aspects of reality which are informative for the over-all ontology and metaphysics of his fictive world. Unless we first perceive the differences between his characters, their similarities will seem merely repetitive or decorative.

Earlier, Nohnberg's failure to note this distinction leads him into another sort of pitfall, a "context" which more thoughtful readers would relegate to the fringes of meaning. He inquires "as to what aspects of Venus are presented by Belpheobe, Florimell and Amoret," and answers that they embody a version of "the three Graces pertaining to Venus." Then comes an excursus on the various names of the Graces, and some quiet far-fetched "ratios" of resemblance among the three characters. But to make a triad of these feminine figures, in the first place, ignores the many crucial distinctions between the twin sisters and Florimell—differences made apparent to careful readers in the process of the poem's unfolding. The contrasting ways in which each character is first presented to us offer clues, for example, to the unlike realms of being which they inhabit, and the different ways in which they enter into and affect human life. Hence the analogy with the Graces is gratuitous and arbitrary, since there is nothing in the text which encourages us to link Belpheobe, Amoret, and Florimell, except the fact that they are all the objects of virtuous devotion by various male characters, and unvirtuous lust by wicked ones. These facts do, indeed, tell us something, but not what Nohnberg thinks they do.

The author's unwillingness to become embroiled in theoretical problems is understandable, given the scale of his project, but he fails to accept even the challenges posed by his own assumptions. Not only is "analogy" left ambiguous, but the poem's manifold allusiveness never is comprehended; it is merely asserted. Most readers take it for granted that multiple analogues are somehow "relevant" to *The Faerie Queene*, but no one really understands, or has been able convincingly to describe, the ways in which these analogues get into, or are referred to by, the poem. In a "literary" work like Spenser's, analogues are usually allusions: references to other literary or sub-literary phenomena, rather than to "the truth of nature." It is plain sailing while Spenser chooses to keep his allusions explicit. Belpheobe is compared to "that famous Queene/Of Amazons, whom Pyrrhus did destroy," and we can safely work out analogical patterns evoked by the allusion to Penthesilea. But, as tireless scholarship has demonstrated, such visible signals are only the blossoms on the great tree of life. There is no doubt that Spenser and his readers enjoyed unearthing the hidden sense of poetry, and we can be sure that large ranges of reference

were deliberately planted in the poem by the author. Yet as soon as allusion ceases to be explicit, it becomes problematic. And beyond a certain point we cannot gain sufficient access to the creative mind to be able adequately to determine degrees of intent. We are driven back, therefore, first to the text itself and to what it can tell us about the hiddenness of its own sense, and second to our experience of what it is *like* to read *The Faerie Queen*, and the sort of knowledge we need in order to understand it.

It is precisely here, however, that Nohrnberg's method of constructing contexts proves insufficient. Book I is interpreted conventionally in terms of biblical imagery: The Siege of Paradise, The Church in the Wilderness. Ever since Ruskin—indeed, since the first anonymous readers of *The Faerie Queene* whose annotations have recently been uncovered, commentators have found scriptural analogies of primary relevance in understanding the Legend of Holiness. But this relevance becomes progressively attenuated and dubious as Nohrnberg moves through his note-cards.

The old Church typifies the new Church, and the new Church, it is logically deduced from Paul's Adamic Christology, is a second Eve. If Una is an Eve, then to whom does Duessa answer? She must be the wife of Adam too, that is, Adam's other wife, or Lilith.

A reader who is willing to accept the rather breathless logic of this passage is then launched into a section of twelve pages which follows the fortunes of Lilith through the biblical commentaries, and then, because "the Lilith demon belongs to the same type as the classical lamiae," unravels the adventures of the lamia. The next section (seven pages) pursues another "parallel for Lilith" (Duessa): the sirens, said to be related to the "mermaids" which Bale, Van der Noot, and others interpolated into their commentary on Isaiah 34: 13 ("an habitation for dragons and a court for ostriches"); the dragons appear as "sirens" in the Septuagint). In all of these nineteen pages of commentary, there is not a single *substantial* quotation from *The Faerie Queene*. Most of Nohrnberg's readers may be as fascinated as he is by the material he has assembled, even though they have seen much of it before. But the surface of Spenser's poem has been totally dissolved in the process of attending to its analogues. The effect of Nohrnberg's method is centrifugal; a specific detail of the poem provides a starting-point for excursions so far-ranging that the origin and purpose of this space-time travel will be lost by the end of the nineteen pages (and they are not an end, but just a beginning). This is the justification for my earlier comment, that such information is most useful when it appears in the form of annotation, so that a reader is free to keep the text in full view and move into commentary only when the poet encourages him to do so.

Allusion always initiates a centrifugal movement, away from a text and into a related but unlike context. Many poets control their allusions carefully; Milton in *Paradise Lost* often encapsulates and limits them within the formal frame of a simile, which thus becomes a window briefly opening upon an as-yet-unconsummated history. Spenser's control of allusion is much less strict, in part because he seems himself to enjoy "wandering" in curious byways, and

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in part because allegory itself is methodically allusive. If it is what Puttenham called "full allegorie," its allusiveness is taciturn; the tenor is not verbally "discovered." Hence the Spenser critic's daunting and as yet almost unattempted task: to derive the principles whereby the text points away from itself and towards the many realms of analogues. But, though the movement is always initially centrifugal, it must be followed by its centripetal complement, the return to a text illuminated by the likeness which the allusion implies.

That such principles are missing from Nohnberg's commentary is not surprising; but because the citations are so voluminous, The Reader, that long-suffering fiction, is burdened beyond the point of tolerance, forced to drag himself through thickets of reference and make decisions, unassisted by the author, about degrees of relevance. Offered, for instance, analogues between the Sons of Agape, Geryon, and the Trinity, he must think harder than Nohnberg does about how Christian reference may be said to be "in" Book IV, as compared with the explicit importation of such reference in Book I. We do not yet know nearly enough about the physiology of *The Faerie Queene*, how it feeds upon the multiple contexts available to Spenser. But it is clear that the starting-point for acquiring such knowledge is a sense of what it is like actually to read the poem. Critical emphasis, in recent years, on "the reader in the poem" has yet to tackle Spenser seriously, though Paul Alpers has made a start. Such concern must go beyond rhetorical analysis to examine the ways in which *The Faerie Queene*, in contact with an informed, responsive intelligence, produces its meanings.

Most of Nohnberg's general conclusions are unstartling, which is a tribute to his own honesty and to the harmonies arrived at by the last twenty years of Spenserian criticism. In some ways his book can be read as a vast extrapolation of Frye's "Structure of Imagery" essay; the fact that there have been other developments in literary criticism since Frye is not much in evidence. Most of Nohnberg's "internal" analogies are based on the notion that the six books are related chiastically or as mirror-images, an idea advanced before but not developed by several critics, including Roche and Fowler. Nohnberg is able to suggest a number of new relationships between Books II and V, and I and VI, and his analyses are more complete than any we have had hitherto. But his book's strength lies in the vast body of detailed lore with which he surrounds Spenser's text. Because that lore is so loosely controlled, its usefulness is much diminished. It will serve as a kind of reference book for future generations of graduate students, who will seize upon it gratefully for general examinations and manufacture many a thesis out of its nuggets. And strong-minded theoretical critics of *The Faerie Queene* will find here a mine of material to sustain their severer contemplations.

Harvard University

ISABEL G. MACCAFFREY

Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and Their Plays by Michael Shapiro. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977. Pp. xiv + 313. \$15.00.

This is a reasonably modest book, boasting of no important new discoveries about the children's troupes and offering no very controversial theory about their performances. Its aim, rather, is to survey its subject methodically, judiciously, and (as far as information about the boy companies themselves goes) succinctly. Chapters set out to tell us who these companies were, the circumstances of their performances, the nature and expectations of their audiences, the styles in which their plays were written and acted, what sorts of plays made up their repertoires, and (by way of appendix) what dramatic use they made of songs and music. Though a general thesis informs these reviews, the style and structure of each chapter assure us that review is the genre Professor Shapiro is working in. No one will lose his way in chapters that begin with explicit signposts ("In this chapter, I propose the preliminary step of grouping together plays performed by all children's troupes, in order to consider the principal kinds of plays they acted and to trace patterns of development within their repertoires" [p. 179]), progress through labeled sub-sections, and end with clear summaries. Nor will the eagle-eyed Balboas of Elizabethan theater studies be moved, on first looking into Shapiro's *Children*, to stare with a wild surmise. W. R. Gair of the University of New Brunswick, for example, can discover to the world his posited location and reconstruction of the Paul's play-house unrivalled by Professor Shapiro, who leaves that matter still a mystery. Where the history of the companies is concerned, Shapiro's acknowledgment to Chambers and Hillebrand announces his lack of the explorer's heady ambition: "I lean very heavily on their work for documentary evidence, having only a few facts to add to the wealth of material they have assembled" (p. 2).

The book's focus is not, in fact, on the actors in their theaters but on the plays they performed. The tag-end of the subtitle ("*...and Their Plays*") really deserves a more prominent place on the cover. The two final chapters survey, through a descriptive account of the kinds of plays produced, the repertoires of the children's two active phases before and after their recess in the 1590's. But earlier chapters entitled "The Occasion" and "The Audience" veer toward similar descriptions of the plays themselves, with a good deal of space given over to individual analyses of *A Trick to Catch The Old One*, *The Widow's Tears*, *Epicoene*, and *Bussy D'Ambois*. Such analyses are by way of illustrating points about the relationship between the plays and their audiences; but here, as well as in the later chapters, a reader may learn more about the plays performed by the children than about the children's performances of the plays.

Shapiro does propose a thesis about these "plays in their social context" (p. vii). The "courtly ambiance" which presumably carried over into private theater performances lent a heightened ritualistic aura to the praise and abuse that were the plays' two dominant motives. "The strategy was to arouse and allay fears of social disintegration and to raise and dispel doubts about individual

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rank, to combine flattery and insult, the opposed but related impulses inherent in all festal celebration. . . . The genius of the children's plays was to reassure the spectator that he had achieved his own wishful view of himself by encouraging him to identify with attractive characters of high rank, and to scatter his doubts about his social status by inviting him to ridicule 'others' " (pp. 38-39). One may wonder how exclusively this sort of genius was the property of the children's plays. Nonetheless, this thesis governs all assertions about the dynamics of audience response in Shapiro's treatment of individual plays. The teasing problem of the effect boy actors might have on those dynamics is left, as far as I can determine, unresolved. When satire is the evident intent, it is easy to say that the children's portrayals mocked the adult world "through miniaturization and mimicry" (pp. 212-213). But how then are miniaturization and mimicry defused in the portrayal of those "attractive characters" with whom the self-indulgent spectator is encouraged "to identify" (Shapiro would include swashbuckling Bussy among these, along with virtually all witty young gallants)? The general argument in Chapter IV about styles of acting might provide the basis for an answer, but more rigorous application of that argument to particular cases in point would help here.

Professor Shapiro's concluding hope is that his book "will provide helpful background for critical interpretation of these works and will illuminate the role of the boy companies in theatrical and literary history" (p. 231). It is a realizable hope, I believe, if we define the audience to whom help and illumination will be extended. Those who consider themselves experts in the field will not be flooded with new light. On the other hand, the book has virtues which make it a useful place to send a student of Elizabethan drama for "helpful background" about the children's plays. Perhaps most useful in this regard is the sensible corrective balance the book provides against extreme points of view. Shapiro's survey of the repertories, for example, "forces one to refine Harbage's categorization of the vast majority of these plays as 'satirical comedies'" (p. 227). And whereas R. A. Foakes and others, stressing the effect of "miniaturization," have read children's plays as wholesale burlesques or parodies, Shapiro argues plausibly on the basis of evident stylistic variation in the plays that the children's range of acting styles included the natural and the declamatory as well as the parodic. This kind of balance, as well as its general and uncluttered coverage, should make *Children of the Revels* a good starting place for any student of the subject.

The Ohio State University

ROBERT C. JONES

The Consciousness of Joyce by Richard Ellmann. New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977. Pp. 150. \$16.95.

James Joyce: The Citizen and the Artist by C. H. Peake. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977. Pp. 396. \$16.95.

Professor Ellmann opens his book with a definition of the key word in its title: "'Consciousness' denotes the movement of the mind both in recognizing its own shape and in maintaining that shape in the face of attack or change." In the Introduction, the implications of this definition are developed: Joyce's life as an artist was a desperate defense of his identity against the pressures exerted upon him by the institutions and the social codes of post-Parnell, Catholic, nationalist Ireland. The ambitious and important task of considering Joyce as an intensely political writer is carried out in the book only to a limited extent, however. Of its three essays, only the last is devoted to the political issue. In the first two, "Homer" and "Shakespeare," Professor Ellmann considers Joyce's use of the *Odyssey* and *Hamlet* in *Ulysses* "to demonstrate how [he] assimilated these two works into his own without giving up his individuality." Professor Ellmann thus moves from an interest in Joyce's consciousness actively engaged with a living society to an interest in his "conscious working" of literary materials. The two enterprises are really quite separate, and not surprisingly, the book never achieves unity, and never really justifies its title.

The essays on Homer and Shakespeare are, nevertheless, interesting and valuable. Professor Ellmann considers Joyce's use not only of the central works but also of the body of scholarship, commentary, and literary response that has formed around each of them—Victor Bérard's *Les Phéniciens et l'Odysée* and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, for example. His knowledge of Joyce's life and of his reading makes him uniquely able to reveal the breadth and complexity of Joyce's mind and his ingenuity in adapting what he read to his own purposes. Ultimately, Professor Ellmann is interested in the impulse behind Joyce's manipulation of his literary sources. Thus he notes the importance of the 1909 marital crisis in the genesis of the novel as well as Joyce's annexation of the theme of sexual betrayal from his sources. It is the fascination with what are ultimately psychological questions which makes the source study so interesting, though the psychological dimension of the inquiry is suggested rather than pursued. Because of his complicated understanding of the interpenetration of Joyce's lived experience with his work, he never diminishes either author or text. The two chapters on sources leave the reader with an enhanced conception of what Joyce has done in the novel.

The real importance of this book rests on the third essay, "Joyce," which considers Joyce and politics. It is customary in Joyce criticism, in spite of the density of political allusion in all of his fiction, to insist that he was apolitical in general and vigorously uninterested in Irish politics after his disillusion, at age nine, at the fall of Charles Stewart Parnell. After this essay, most of which was recently published in *The New York Review of Books*, it will be difficult to maintain this attitude. Professor Ellmann presents specific political statements made by Joyce, which have been known before if ignored or misinterpreted,

and new information on Joyce's reading in the personal library he acquired between 1900 and 1920 and left in Trieste when he moved to Paris. This library was preserved relatively intact by Stanislaus Joyce and his heirs, and on the basis of the presence in it of socialist, anarchist, and nationalist texts, Professor Ellmann argues not only that Joyce had political interests but that they had a definite direction. More important, he suggests Joyce's sympathy with the revolutionary effort in Ireland which was moving toward separation from England all through the time in which he was at work on *Ulysses*, and he equates the revolutionary achievement which is the book with the political revolution. Even in this important essay, Professor Ellmann suggests rather than establishes the political dimension of Joyce's work. *The Consciousness of Joyce* should have been a more substantial book than it is; its arguments should have been pursued with greater rigor and consistency. Nevertheless anyone interested in Joyce is once again in Professor Ellmann's debt. His publication in an Appendix of the 600 titles from Joyce's pre-1920 library is invaluable in itself, but the wise suggestiveness of his interests in this book opens up new areas of scholarship which undoubtedly will be pursued.

The title of Professor Peake's book suggests that he, like Professor Ellmann, is exploring the question of Joyce's relation to Irish society. In fact, however, he is interested neither in Ireland nor in Joyce as a person; he is interested in "burgher" and "artist" as they exist abstractly in literary criticism, cut off from the dense social context in which citizens and artists exist in novels, certainly in the novels of Joyce. Professor Peake's book is really and overwhelmingly an occasion for that most sterile pursuit of academic criticism: close reading with moralizing commentary. The logic behind the title of the book and its thesis is that Joyce wrote one book about citizens (*Dubliners*), one book about an artist (*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*), and one book in which he was able to bring together an artist and a citizen (*Ulysses*). Style and symbol, defined in orthodox handbook fashion, as Mr. Bloom might say, are introduced to suggest that as citizen and artist move together, Joyce writes more skillfully and in a more complex way. Within the framework suggested by the title, armed with no critical methodology, asking no critical questions, Professor Peake sets out on the tedious jog from "The Sisters" to *Finnegans Wake*. Not surprisingly, but regrettably, along the way he finds that the *Dubliners* stories fit the scheme announced by Joyce in his letter to Grant Richards, that Stephen's theory of art explains *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and indeed all of Joyce's work. In one endless chapter, he considers "style" and "technique" in every episode of *Ulysses*. The highly personal nature of Professor Peake's enterprise is indicated by the lack of symmetry in his book. For example, in the long chapter on *Ulysses*, he devotes less than one page to "Nestor," two and one-half pages to "Proteus" and, inexplicably, eleven and one-half pages to "Aeolus." By the same token, having devoted 109 pages to Joyce's early work and 230 to *Ulysses*, he polishes off that most complex and difficult of Joyce texts, *Finnegans Wake*, in twenty-three. (The reason for the inclusion of *Finnegans Wake* in the book, since it does not fit in Professor Peake's scheme, remains a mystery.)

In his Preface, Professor Peake writes that his book grew out of his

lectures at the University of London and was intended not for scholars but for "interested readers." The book was, however, published in this country by a university press and seems clearly to be addressed to an academic audience; "interested readers" are far more likely to turn to a book like Professor Ellmann's, which is widely distributed. In effect, Professor Peake is inviting the scholarly world to join his hapless students in watching him read and respond to Joyce. He is adding nothing to knowledge about Joyce; he is suggesting no new way of thinking about him. If Professor Peake were an interesting reader, we might nevertheless, be grateful for his invitation. But he is not an interesting reader. He smooths over ambiguities, ignores difficulties, tidies up disturbances. He leaves us not with useful insight into Joyce's prodigally inventive and difficult work, but with his own sanitized and rationalized vision of that work. Against all the odds, and against the dreary but powerful critical tradition that sees Joyce as a frigid ironist, Professor Peake is suggesting in this book that Joyce is ultimately a sentimental moralist. *James Joyce: The Citizen and the Artist* leaves us with nothing that we can use.

JEANNE A. FLOOD

Radcliffe Institute

The Montecassino Passion and the Poetics of Medieval Drama by Robert Edwards. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977. Pp. 204. \$12.50.

In 1936 Dom Mauro Inguanz discovered the text of a 12th century Latin Passion play among the pages of the *Registrum I Thomae Abbatis, 1285-1288*. Although the text is incomplete it contains 370 lines mixing stage directions in prose with dialogue in the form of *versus tripartitus caudatus* consisting of two rhymed lines of eight syllables each, followed by a seven-syllable line rhyming with its counterpart in the next stanza. It is embellished with musical transitions between scenes and has blank spaces which were evidently left for miniatures. Although Dom Inguanz reedited the text and added to his conclusions about it in an article published in 1939, his discovery was largely ignored by students of liturgical drama until Sandro Sticca published *The Latin Passion Play: Its Origins and Development* in 1970. Sticca pointed out that the Montecassino Passion is the earliest Passion play known. It is therefore a key text for understanding one of the most important dramatic genres of the later Middle Ages, a genre that is still flourishing today at Oberammergau.

Edwards' book is thus the second full-dress study of the Montecassino Passion. It assumes a knowledge of Sticca's discussion of the content, paleography, and dating of the play. Edwards discusses the relation of legal forms of argument to the dialogue and structure of the play, the influence of visual art—especially Byzantine miniatures—on the unknown author's concept of his material, and the parallels between the themes of the play and the Montecassino liturgy for Good Friday. There is considerable and wide-ranging discussion of the theoretical framework within which one should interpret

liturgical drama, and discussion, which strikes this reader as too generalized to be of permanent value, of the play's music.

The book ends with a chapter titled "The Poetics of Medieval Drama" arguing that the hierarchy beginning with plot and ending with spectacle found in Aristotle's *Poetics* is misleading for drama of the Middle Ages. Edwards notes that medieval authors regarded visual images—"seeing"—as the normative means of understanding invisible realities expressed in art. He quotes Rabanus Maurus to illustrate the point: "The theatre is given its name...because in it, people standing above and looking, watch the plays" (p. 161). If so, a specifically medieval poetics should place spectacle first rather than last among the elements of drama. The visual scenes of the Montecassino Passion, often fragmented in the manner of programs of miniatures, bear the burden of expression, which is further enhanced by the use of stations (*sedes*) and simultaneous staging. Edwards argues that these facts explain the concentration of the Montecassino author on scenes that are representational, whatever secondary moral or symbolic meanings they may have.

The Montecassino Passion extends Sandro Sticca's work. It is interesting and frequently stimulating. Although it cannot be included among the works that might be labeled "essential" in the rapidly expanding field of studies of liturgical drama, it will repay a careful reading with fresh information and—in the last chapter—a thoughtful attempt to formulate a theory of liturgical drama adequate to the plays themselves.

O. B. HARDISON, JR.

The Folger Shakespeare Library

The Situation of Poetry: Contemporary Poetry and its Traditions by Robert Pinsky. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976. Pp. xi + 188. \$11.50.

Naked Angels: The Lives and Literature of the Beat Generation by John Tytell. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976. Pp. 273. \$3.95.

Marianne Moore: Poet of Affection by Pamela White Hadas. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1977. Pp. xii + 243. \$15.00.

Virtually a commonplace in some quarters of contemporary criticism, the idea that modern poetry is continuous with romanticism, or even just an extension of it, is still a relatively recent one and, despite strong arguments in its favor, still apparently open to debate. Indeed, some recent writers, unwilling to accept the idea of an unqualified continuity, and yet also unable to follow the antiromanticism of the New Critics or to accept the modernists' own claims for their movement as a complete break with the past, have been turning in a kind of minority report on the issue, stressing certain basic differences between the romantics and the moderns in terms of their philosophical contexts while allowing that there are grounds for comparison in other areas. As one such writer—Frank Lentricchia in his recent book on Robert Frost—suggests, the

romantic idea of the primacy of the imagination as a creative and redemptive power, and the granting to the imagination of a cognitive function, particularly by Coleridge in his turn from Kant to Schelling, could obviously find greater nourishment in an atmosphere dominated by the transcendental thinking of nineteenth-century German metaphysics than they could in our own historical moment, so forcefully shaped by the work of Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. Yet the notion of continuity in the literature of the last 150 years persists despite such distinctions, and what Robert Pinsky now suggests in his useful and interesting but limited book is that it be extended to contemporary poetry as well. While his argument is often a valuable one in terms of rhetorical relationships between specific poets and poems, it is precisely the broader historical and theoretical context of the issues he raises that points up the limitations of his outlook.

At a time when the term "postmodern" is much in vogue—a term avoided by Pinsky in what one suspects is a deliberate act of omission—his suggestion that contemporary poetry is traditional is not merely quaint or old-fashioned but fairly radical, though in a conservative rather than an innovative sense. His conservatism is grounded in the conviction that the poem "should be able to help us," if only "by delivering the relief that something has been understood, or even seen, well," and in the related conviction that the poem is basically an act of communication, as opposed to an unmediated event or experience. To reverse Wallace Stevens's formula, it is not the thing itself that Pinsky wants, but ideas about the thing, not a denial or transcendence of the abstract nature of language, but a full acceptance of it, seeing it not as a limitation but as an opportunity to take advantage of elements of poetic speech, such as the discursive and the descriptive, that have been largely avoided or subverted in modernism.

Pinsky reminds me here (not to mention Yvor Winters) of another conservative poet and critic, the Australian A. D. Hope, who has spoken of "the middle form of poetry" as "the form in which the uses of poetry approach closest to the uses of prose, and yet remain essentially poetry." Whereas Hope defines his position as an antiromantic one, however, Pinsky interprets the whole romantic and postromantic tradition as an ongoing internalized struggle between a nominalist view of experience and the realist view of language as an abstract medium. The good poets, for him, are the ones who do not simply accept such modernist slogans as Pound's "Go in fear of abstractions," or MacLeish's "A poem should not mean/But be," but those who pursue these goals while also registering a sense of what Pinsky calls "cost, misgiving, difficulty." It should be clear, of course, that this sense is very much Pinsky's own, even if it is a persuasive way of looking at modern poetry. Ultimately, though, it turns his book into an implicit call for a withdrawal from the experimental edge of modernism, a kind of retreat back into the safe but limited possibilities of language regarded, from a realist perspective, as an abstract web of concepts and patterns absolutely separate from experience.

Given this Cartesian or classical view of language, with its insistence on the radical isolation of words from things and of poetic forms from immediate experience, the whole modernist enterprise for Pinsky is, at best, largely a

series of strategies minimizing or camouflaging the essential, unbridgeable gap between *res* and *verba* and, at worst, an uncritical acceptance of the possibility of the nominalist poem, the poem that claims to achieve the condition of a thing. And the history of poetry since the romantics becomes a history of responses to this basic problem. It is in this sense that Pinsky insists on the traditional nature of contemporary poetry. His aim, as he points out in his preface, is not to provide yet another survey of that poetry but to explore principles, by which he means the problems and opportunities presented to writers by what he prefers to call "the current state of the modernist tradition." These problems and opportunities, in turn, are defined in terms of the role played by the poetry of the past "in the mind of one who is about to read or to write a poem," and that past, in Pinsky's conception, is unavoidable, in the sense that the serious writer must wrestle with it and master it before he can either use it for his own purposes or abandon it altogether. The point is not simply that Pinsky, like T. S. Eliot in 1919, is subordinating the individual talent to tradition, but that contemporary poets, in his view, for all the waywardness and apparent novelty of their styles and voices, are nevertheless responding to the work of their predecessors, and that response, as Pinsky sees it, is not an "anxious" one but an embodiment of tradition, or what he calls the "quiet workings of shared formal knowledge."

Thus the bulk of his argument is given over to a close textual demonstration of how poets as varied as Frost and Stevens, Williams and Roethke, Merwin and Ammons encounter problems and employ strategies that ultimately descend from a key romantic text like the "Ode to a Nightingale"; or how a triangulation of poets like "Hardy, Ransom, Berryman" constitutes a kind of affinity group within literary history (as opposed to a relationship based on a more conventional notion of influence) and suggests that similar styles have answered to similar needs at various times. Such procedures have the effect of turning all the poets he considers into contemporaries, since they are all being viewed, more or less, from the perspective of their response to one basic issue—the gap between words and things and the attempt to overcome it. Despite his distaste for Harold Bloom's notion of intertextuality, Pinsky in fact is setting up dialogues between poets that are similar to Bloom's although they lack the psychological aggressiveness and defensiveness that Bloom primarily focuses on. But in both cases the tendency is to avoid history. Though Pinsky's discussion raises the question of just what it is that constitutes change in literature, his attitude seems to be that such change is largely superficial, a series of conventions or stylistic fashions that hide the basic phenomenon of speech as a counter-point to the physical world. Implicitly, Pinsky is suggesting that poetry undergoes few real changes in a tradition that includes not only the romantic, the modern, and the contemporary, but that (in his most daringly imaginative comparison) embraces George Gascoigne at one end and Allen Ginsberg at the other. In this sense, all poetry is contemporary, or at least Pinsky is trying to locate the grounds, beyond variations in rhetoric and imagery and attitudes toward them, that would make it so.

What finally limits his argument is Pinsky's refusal to venture outside his own definition of the nominalist/realist dualism or even to consider developments

in critical and poetic theory which look beyond his own sense of the act of speech as separate from the physical world. In addition to the work of poets like Merwin, Ammons, and Snyder, who are all trying to break out of what Roethke calls "the dreary dance of opposites," an attempt with which Pinsky is not in sympathy, I am thinking here of the recent work of a critic like Hazard Adams, who, starting for such figures as Blake, Vico, and Cassirer, is trying to develop a view of language as formative or creative rather than merely representative. Or there is the view of modernism set forth by J. Hillis Miller more than a decade ago as precisely the overcoming of the sort of dualism that Pinsky so insists upon. In its thrust toward reality, Miller's version of modernism results in a poetry that, in the case of Stevens, moves beyond dualism and representational thinking, and, in the case of Williams, achieves an ego-shattering apprehension of the world that is all but unmediated.

By his own admission, Pinsky bases his outlook on modern poetry on a rather small and arbitrary handful of books and essays whose viewpoint he hopefully describes as "conservative and generous." Within the limits of that viewpoint, he manages not only to offer a series of interesting and even brilliant readings of specific texts but to organize a fluent and coherent discussion around an impressive variety of contemporary poets, poems, and styles. For some readers, however, the limits of that viewpoint will finally be too great, and Pinsky will seem to have purchased the coherence of his argument at the cost of too great an exclusion of recent thought about the issues with which he deals.

At the end of his enthusiastic account of the Beat Generation, John Tytell declares that "the significance of a literary movement may be measured by its vision of the world." As this statement suggests, the reader interested in the *literary* significance of a literary movement will have to settle here for a popularization and extension of that movement's values instead of a rigorous critical assessment of its writing. Tytell, to be sure, resists succumbing completely to the dark glamour of the beats' underground life-style and does discuss their work. His book is divided into two main parts, the first consisting of biographical narratives about the movement's central figures—William Burroughs, Jack Kerouac, and Allen Ginsberg—while the second offers chronological surveys of their writing. But, although he speaks of the theoretical basis and political implications of Burroughs's "cut-up" method with some skill, and analyzes the "spontaneous bop prosody" of Kerouac and Ginsberg in terms of a daringly romantic expression of self in the midst of the stifling and conformist cultural atmosphere of the fifties, his acceptance of their work is finally so unqualified, and his adoption of the beat vision of the world so complete, that the book's critical value becomes negligible.

While he seems to recognize that an aesthetic of spontaneity necessarily involves certain risks, this does not prevent Tytell from lashing out at his heroes' critics for pointing to their frequent failures. In defense of Allen Ginsberg, he offers this piece of dubious logic: "The fact that the eye simply cannot contain the poem on a page, the expansive scope and surreal leaps of Ginsberg's poetry have all contributed to preventing the critics from inventing the necessary categories through which to view his work." But Tytell's own

method of paraphrase and assertion will not convince those hostile critics of the Beat Generation that he himself is any closer than they are to those categories, which by the end of his book seem more necessary than ever.

Marianne Moore's famous statement, in a poem called "Poetry," that she, too, dislikes it—a statement that subtly assumes an anti-poetic attitude on the part of the reader—immediately raises a central theme of modernism: the antagonistic relationship between the poet and his or her medium. But if Moore is anti-poetic, it is only because poetry has been so narrowly defined, invalidating itself, as it were, by discriminating against "business documents and/school-books," excluding too much of the world. In her efforts to counterbalance this narrowness, she invented a kind of poem that is characteristically modern in its impersonality and inclusiveness and yet curiously personal in its directness and indulgence of idiosyncrasy. Inviting and forbidding at once, Moore is a hard poet to write about.

Pamela White Hadas's attempt has resulted in a long, ambitious, densely-argued, and finally unhelpful book that fails largely because its focus is scattered and undefined—scattered among bits and pieces of Moore's work which are never brought together to make an impression *as a whole* on the reader. Hadas's thesis is the unobjectionable one that Moore's forbidding structures are a means not toward impersonality but of protecting an intensity of feeling. But in conducting her argument, she exchanges such conventional critical procedures as tracing her author's development or placing her work in its larger historical and intellectual contexts for a set of categories and concerns that seem private or personal to the point of solipsism. All too often she quotes lines and phrases from Moore not to illuminate the poetry but to support her own obscure musings about style or survival. Straining toward the aphoristic and at times annoyingly playful and punning, her writing is almost constantly coming between the reader and any clear focus on Moore. It is capable on almost any page of tossing off the following sort of sentence: "The faith that is originally significant is the creator's own faith in faith's significance."

Late in the book, particularly in a chapter on Moore's animal poems, Hadas shows that she can comment specifically on a text. But she conducts her argument in so thanklessly demanding a way that I'm afraid she will have lost most of her readers by then.

Boston College

ROBERT KERN

The Middle Way: Puritanism and Ideology in American Romantic Fiction
by Michael T. Gilmore. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1977.
Pp. x + 220. \$12.00.

Ever since D. H. Lawrence's exposé of the American psyche, the question of our literary and cultural origins has intrigued students of American literature. For the most part, our major literary scholars have not been content to study individual authors in their own right, or investigate self-contained "periods"

of literary history; rather, they have sought encompassing explanations for the "uniqueness" of American literature.¹ In general, these scholars have focused primarily on nineteenth-century American literature, neglecting almost entirely the influence of colonial thought on (say) Hawthorne and Melville's fictions. During the last ten years, however, the revolution in American Puritan studies has altered the perspective of a new generation of scholars armed with a sophisticated understanding of Puritan imagination and culture. Of late, they have been prepared to offer a new synthesis, detailing the development of American literature from its colonial origins to its flowering at mid-century. Michael T. Gilmore's *The Middle Way* is the most recent offering "to suggest," as the author declares in the preface, "new lines of inquiry into the ideological and cultural continuity of American letters."

As befits a member of a rising generation, Gilmore pits his theory of "the middle way" against the elders, specifically Richard Chase, who claimed that the American novel was characterized by metaphysical extremes and stark, Manichean polarities. In contrast, Gilmore maintains that the Puritans' ideal of mediation between extremes—the rejection of both Antinomian enthusiasm (as promulgated by Anne Hutchinson and other visionaries) and Arminian legalism (later typified by Benjamin Franklin)—constitutes the colonial legacy to American literature. The Puritan injunction to live in the world yet be not of it—the doctrine of "inner-worldly sanctity," as Gilmore defines it—serves as a model of the middle way ideal. More important for Gilmore's purposes, the theological middle way corresponds to and is objectified by the theory of romance as formulated by its practitioners. Thus our major nineteenth-century writers "appropriated Calvinism's grammar of thought for their own imaginative purposes"; they imbibed the Puritan ideal, transforming it into an "aesthetic correlative" for the American romance.

Before applying the notion of "the middle way" to the major writings of Hawthorne and Melville (and in the last chapter, to Henry James' *The Golden Bowl*), Gilmore traces its history from the first generation Puritans to Cotton Mather (who is the crucial figure in the transmission of the middle way to nineteenth-century America) and Benjamin Franklin (described as the perverter of the original ideal). In Gilmore's scenario, Mather's heroic attempt "to breathe fresh life" into his ancestral religion links him to his nineteenth-century heirs, "who undertook in their fiction to salvage the metaphysical vision of the first settlers." In contrast, Franklin labored against the religious ideal of the middle way, and sadly, by mid-century, his version of a utilitarian America, "prizing progress above all else," had emerged triumphant. The nineteenth-century romancers responded harshly to the ideological legacy of Benjamin Franklin whose spirit, they believed, had come to permeate America. Their scathing attacks on the American Way (as espoused by Franklin) were, in effect, attempts

¹ Among the more influential of these studies are R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, 1955); Richard Chase, *The American Novel and its Tradition* (Garden City, N. Y., 1957); and Quentin Anderson, *The Imperial Self: An Essay in American Literature and Cultural History* (New York, 1971).

at reformulating "in literary terms...the theological balance of the founders"; they "wished to reclaim the spiritual stance of their ancestors." That stance, according to Gilmore, was one of "taking a middle way between...extremes," and it is by this standard that he measures and interprets the fiction of Hawthorne and Melville.

In the case of Hawthorne, Gilmore posits that Hawthorne's formulation of romance as a "neutral territory" is the aesthetic equivalent of the Puritan middle way. Moreover, Hawthorne formally adapted the extremes of the middle way in his fiction. Jaffrey Pynchon (in *The House of the Seven Gables*) and Chillingworth (in *The Scarlet Letter*) are both likened to Franklin, and both are representative of the "legalistic" mentality shunned by the Puritans and Hawthorne. Equally dangerous (and unacceptable) for Hawthorne is Holgrave's transcendental reforming zeal and Hester's anarchic antinomianism, the other extreme of the middle way. Instead, Hawthorne offers a metaphysical middle ground (in the Puritan tradition) "to curb the intensity of opposition between the extremes." As a result of this mediating process, Hawthorne assumes the role of an Old Testament prophet, a Jeremiah, warning a backsliding Israel to repent or else suffer God's wrath. Thus Hawthorne's fictions are "sermons in disguise," his art a nineteenth-century analogue to the colonial jeremiad. In this context, Gilmore interprets *The Scarlet Letter* and *Gables* as works which evince "a deep-seated dissatisfaction with the nature of contemporary American society." In *Gables*, for example, Hawthorne expresses "his revulsion from the strident, facile, and self-assertive chauvinism of his compatriots." The glorious destiny for God's New Israel (as Dimmesdale prophesies in his Election Sermon in the penultimate scene of *The Scarlet Letter*) has been "betrayed" (Gilmore's word) by the reality of Hawthorne's America.

Melville, too, says Gilmore, imbibed the spirit of the middle way. Like Hawthorne's, his fictions call upon a sinful nation to repent. Although Ahab perceives himself to be on a millennial quest, his antinomianism (which makes him feel beyond the constraints of history) signals the approaching American apocalypse, a forecast of national doom. Ishmael's seeming "salvation" is not prophetic of a brighter period for the country; he remains an "orphan in an America which has deserted its principles and turned a deaf ear to its speakers of truth." In similar fashion, "Benito Cereno" is Melville's jeremiad against the sin of slavery, his indictment against a nation that has "betrayed its calling." The ending of "Cereno" suggests, in Gilmore's reading, "that the American Israel has committed anew the sin of its predecessor...The dream... has been shattered by the reality of slavery." Only in "Billy Budd" did Melville present a character who achieves the ideal of the middle way. In confronting the dilemma posed by Billy and Claggert, Captain Vere "shuns the extremes"; his truth, therefore, "embodies the vision of inner-worldly sainthood" characteristic of the Puritan middle way.

Although Gilmore's notion of the middle way offers a suggestive context in which to interpret American literature, it serves to reduce the import of Hawthorne and Melville's fiction to a single, sad refrain: American life has betrayed the original promise. More important, however, Gilmore's "middle way" glosses over the enormous tension embedded in the Puritan injunction to live

in the world with "weaned affections." If anything, the Puritan Way bespeaks the rigors and demands involved in attaining visible sanctity, not of mediation between extremes. In Gilmore's rendering, Hawthorne's Puritan inheritance may be traced to his view of the romance as a "neutral territory," which, Gilmore asserts, "is his equivalent of the state of weanedness that the Puritans attributed to the elect." But the attempt to correlate Hawthorne's aesthetic with Puritan doctrine simplifies the complex transmission of Puritanism to nineteenth-century American culture. Hawthorne's "neutral territory" partakes of both the real and ideal—the Actual and Imaginary; it combines, one might say, the best of both worlds. The Puritans, however (at least the first generation), strenuously *avoided* compromise. As revolutionary Saints on an historic errand, they refused to settle for nothing less than the Kingdom of God in America. Their Way entailed no arbitration between extremes, as Hawthorne himself recognized, and dramatized in his Puritan tales. The American Puritan imagination translated adversity into election, and retold the history of their errand as the History of the Work of Redemption. In response to adversity and the apparent failure of the errand, the Puritan mind fashioned the symbol of America, a symbol designed to absorb the contradictions of American experience, and in that process, to proclaim anew the glorious destiny of the country.²

Cotton Mather, of course, was the foremost spokesman of the American Puritan Way. Yet like Hawthorne and Melville, he was deeply troubled with the seeming declension of his America; he, too, bemoaned the betrayal of the Founders' dream. Mather's monumental defense of the Puritan Way, the *Magnalia* (1702), contained among its collection of hagiographies a "Life of William Phips," a biography often described as the Puritan analogue to Franklin's *Autobiography*. In this respect, Mather's "Phips" suggests (contrary to Gilmore's argument) that the polarities between Mather and Franklin's ideologies might not appear to be that extreme. Indeed, all our major writers embraced (to some extent) the myth of American exceptionalism even as they labored against it. It is this relentless love/hate relationship with the meaning of America that Gilmore's notion of the middle way obscures. Hawthorne was undoubtedly uneasy with the reality of America, as Gilmore proves very clearly, noting that Hester's millennial vision looks forward to the somber description of Jacksonian America which opens the novel. Yet his later novels—*Gables* and especially *The Marble Faun*—seem to embrace the myth of American progress. And perhaps it was Melville's *inability* to rest comfortably in the "middle way" which issued in *Pierre*, his most savage critique of the legacy of the American myth (and its transmission) to his own time.

The question of ideological and cultural continuities, then, is much more complicated than Gilmore's study would indicate. The Puritan legacy enraged and inspired our great romancers; it was the inner propulsion that drove and tormented their imaginations. *The Middle Way* portrays that torment, but

² An analysis of the Puritan habit of mind and its legacy to nineteenth-century American literature may be found in Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven, 1975).

does not adequately describe the process of cultural assimilation from Mather's Puritanism to Hawthorne's romanticism. Its failure, it seems to me, lies in the concept of the middle way itself—a term which simplifies both the Puritan experience and that of nineteenth-century America. Our romancers could never embrace a middle way. Their stance was too ironic, too obsessive, for any resolution or mediation of the problem of America.

DONALD WEBER

University of California at Los Angeles

Robert Frost: *The Work of Knowing* by Richard Poirier. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977. Pp. xvii + 322. \$11.95.

Although disparaged by some as a nineteenth-century holdover in a twentieth-century literary revolution, and censured by others as a political conservative in an era of social change, Robert Frost was in one sense lucky. Critics never ignored him. For every negative evaluation to appear in print, two positive appraisals could be counted. Frost stepped into the literary spotlight immediately upon the publication of his first two books in London in 1913 and 1914, and for the next half century of his life, the light never dimmed.

Today the bulb has not even flickered. If he were still alive, fifteen years after his death in 1963 at age 89, he would be pleased to note that the Frost story goes on. In the last five years alone, for example, thirteen books on the poet have been published.¹ Most of these studies are good indeed, and Richard Poirier's *Robert Frost: The Work of Knowing* is a distinguished addition to the list.

Poirier takes Frost's comment (January 1, 1917) to Louis Untermeyer as a starting point: "I should like to be so subtle at this game as to seem to a casual person altogether obvious." Convinced that Frost is a poet of genius because his subtleties are inextricable from his apparent accessibility, Poirier stresses again the well-known argument that those who insist on Yeats's or Eliot's difficulty and yet dismiss Frost's complexity do so only by ignoring the latter's best work. Some of Poirier's general statements are not at all new, but he reiterates them as frames for the developing interpretations: Frost is most evasive when his idioms are most ordinary; his surface accessibility lures the reader to relax;

¹Elaine Barry, *Robert Frost on Writing*; Reginald Cook, *Robert Frost: A Living Voice*; Joan Crane, *Robert Frost Books and Manuscripts in the Clifton Waller Barrett Library*; Donald J. Greiner, *Robert Frost: The Poet and His Critics*; Frank Lentricchia, *Robert Frost: Modern Poetics and the Landscapes of Self*; Frank and Melissa Lentricchia, *Robert Frost: A Bibliography, 1913-1974*; Kathleen Morrison, *Robert Frost: A Pictorial Chronicle*; William Sutton (ed.), *Newdick's Season of Frost*; Jac Tharpe (ed.), *Frost: Centennial Essays, 1, II*, Lawrence Thompson and R. H. Winnick, *Robert Frost: The Later Years, 1938-1963*; Peter Van Egmond, *The Critical Reception of Robert Frost*; and Linda Wagner, *Robert Frost: The Critical Reception*.

his allusions are often off-hand; his metrical patterns hide implications. But when, in the introduction, Poirier suggests the sexual reverberations of "The Need of Being Versed in Country Things," we know that this book proposes a new look at a major poet.

Poirier argues persuasively that Frost engages our keenest reading skills because the poet's "ultimate subject is the interpretive process itself" (xi). Playing with the possibilities for interpretations, Frost shows that particular objects, the obvious signs of life, suggest implications that baffle and elude us. Clearly, Poirier's Frost (and mine) is not Yvor Winters' "spiritual drifter." The poet's evasiveness, unfortunately made famous in a disparaging way by Winters' well-known essay, is purposeful, part of his understanding of poetry as a "form of life." To counter Winters' drifter, Poirier proposes Frost as "negotiator between terms of possibility set up with daring, risk, and a truly marvelous poise" (xvi).

Yet this book is much more than a rebuttal of Frost's negative critics. Aware of the misguided tendency to separate Frost from his more orthodoxly modern peers, Poirier implies that a governing principle of his study is a discussion of modernism and of the difficulty of defining Frost's relationship to it. He begins with Lionel Trilling's unwitting initiation of a cultural episode, Trilling's speech at Frost's eighty-fifth birthday dinner in 1959. He grants Trilling's insistence on the terror in Frost's canon, but he disagrees with Trilling when he argues, correctly I think, that the poet does not challenge old verities but reaffirms them in startling new ways. Thus Poirier asks, what is new about Frost's poetry and what needs to be said about it?

This book answers those questions: Frost's poems communicate terror without himself being terrified; reading them, our lives may be more complicated but not more unmanageable; the poems suggest that our capacity to make sense of life parallels the writing of poetry because both acts are heroic. Poirier urges us not to interpret all of the situations in the poems as dramatic (despite Frost's claim to the contrary), nor to exempt the poet from the perplexities of his own poems by substituting "speaker" for Frost: "His greatness depends, I think, in large part on his actually seeking out opportunities for being in untenable positions" (15). I am especially impressed by Poirier's skill at analyzing how grammar and diction support or modify theme, for clearly Frost's brilliant rendering of sound and tone is one reason why he, unlike his contemporaries, could communicate a human voice reacting to a specific dilemma. The argument for Frost's modernity entices the reader because of the unexpected terms of the discussion. Poirier compares, for example, not only Frost and Joyce generally but also *A Boy's Will* and *Portrait* specifically. He knows, of course, that Joyce's ironies are often cultural or historical whereas Frost's are personal, but his suggestions are aimed at those die-hards who persistently define modernism solely according to Joyce's or Eliot's pronouncements. Poirier's perspective on modernism is alone worth an hour with this book because he argues that the dislocations characteristic of much modernist poetry "are not inevitably the result of cultural and historical conditions." Surely we now agree that rather than link Joyce or Eliot with, and exclude Frost from, mythologizing the twentieth century, each writer exhibits different mythologies about the "function of literature in the century."

Although these comments suggest that biography is not Poirier's concern, he does take exception to Lawrance Thompson's "harsh" verbal portrait. Perhaps Thompson does go too far, but I wonder if pointed reactions to Frost's biographer do equal damage to our struggle to cope with this contradictory poet. To say that Thompson misses the point entirely about Frost's tendency to manipulate is to cause the reader to think about attempts to ignore the unpleasant qualities in a complex man. Thus I feel more comfortable when Poirier sidesteps his disagreement with Thompson and encourages me to re-examine a remarkable canon in the light of his own sensitive readings. What emerges is a discussion of Frost as a highly conscious artist, a poet who knew exactly what he was doing, a writer who was "never innocent of what his poems imply" (54). The general implications of this opinion are acceptable, but I question their applicability in specific instances. Was Frost, for example, that aware of the potential problems if he placed "The Subverted Flower," in *A Boy's Will*? Poirier's reading of the relationship between "The Subverted Flower," written in time to be included in *A Boy's Will* (1913) but withheld from publication until 1942, and the sexually oriented lyrics in the book is excellent, but I doubt if Frost declined publication for all of the reasons Poirier offers as examples of the poet's conscious artistry. His analysis of the threat to the poetic imagination by the "disasters of love" nevertheless remains a highpoint of his study.

Many other highlights are equally impressive: the discussion of how Frost proposes visions by "elaborate forms of denial"; the suggestion that the poems of home and marriage are about poetic form and the nature of metaphor; the comparison of Frost and Stevens which sends us back to the poems to note how for Frost truth must come from finite experience while for Stevens imagination may create truth; the disagreements with Edward Connery Lathem's emendations in the 1969 collected poems; and the extensive analysis of *A Further Range* (1936).

Some nagging reservations remain. Does "The Subverted Flower" have primarily four beats or three to the line? And what about the husband's warning ("Home Burial") that someone is "coming down the road"? I also wonder if Professor Poirier underestimates both general fans and scholars when he asserts that most readers usually miss the speaker's urging to rebuild the wall in "Mending Wall," or that the "it" in "The Most of It" is normally misread. These complexities have been explicated for some time now. Finally, I note a tendency to overpraise Frost. Although I agree that consistent admiration of the anthologized favorites detracts from appreciation of the even better, lesser-known poems, I question if the impasse is eased by implying that Frost is "poetically daring" in "Good Hours" and "stunningly casual" in "Happiness Makes Up in Height for What It Lacks in Length." Do these relatively minor lyrics deserve such rhetoric?

Yet in the context of the entire book these reservations do not finally matter. Professor Poirier is always challenging and consistently clear (though his style is often wordy). He urges a new perspective on modernism, and thus he emphasizes the absolute importance of Frost's poetry to twentieth-century art. If the old poet himself had lived to read this study, he would have bragged

that the spotlight still shines. He would have been happy. But I am even more pleased that Richard Poirier wrote this book.

DONALD J. GREINER

University of South Carolina

The Authority of Experience: Essays in Feminist Criticism edited by Arlyn Diamond and Lee R. Edwards. Amherst, Mass.: University of Mass. Press, 1976. Pp. xiv + 304. \$15.00.

The Authority of Experience: Essays in Feminist Criticism demonstrates with a considerable "authority" of its own that feminist criticism has an original and scholarly contribution to make to the understanding of literature and the methods of criticism. The editors have included three articles on the theory of feminist criticism and thirteen additional essays that address the following authors: Chaucer, Shakespeare, DeFoe, Richardson, Fielding, Melville, C. Brontë, Chopin, Woolf, Hemingway, Lessing, and Porter. Contrary to the frequent stereotype that feminist criticism deals only with women characters and writers, this distinguished volume illustrates forcefully that feminist criticism is a critical perspective that works with the whole fabric of literature: its context, its text, its author, its aesthetic, its critics, its readers.

The opening three theoretical articles present a solid, if not pathbreaking, grounding in the critical perspective that characterizes the remaining thirteen essays of practical criticism. In "Female Criticism: A Prologue," Annette Barnes successfully places the fundamental tenet of feminist criticism—that no criticism is "value-free" or "objective"—in its appropriate epistemological context. Like any form of "knowing," criticism does not exist in a "vacuum of Truth," and the critic "cannot come to the task as an ideal spectator devoid of culture, history, political perspective." Since all perception is filtered through some "classificatory schema," the critical ideal of objectivity typified by Matthew Arnold's aesthetic theory is impossible and deceptive. Although Barnes could have done more to articulate other aspects of the feminist critical framework, she is to be commended for gently dissolving the epistemologically unsound, yet widely held belief that "mainstream" criticism is "objective" and feminist criticism is "ideological."

Lynn Sukenick's "On Women and Fiction" examines the "classificatory schema" for the nature of women in the dominant critical and intellectual traditions from the eighteenth century to the present. It is an excellent, richly researched and comprehensive exploration of the ways in which culture and politics have shaped literary criticism of women artists. The real usefulness of her essay, however, is not the general broadside against the hidden bias of "phallic criticism," to use Mary Ellmann's term for androcentric critical assumptions. She delineates the specific ideologies about innate sex differences that have greatly influenced both literary critics and women writers: masculine and feminine have been equated with sense and sentiment, reason and feeling in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and, consciousness and being,

rational and irrational in the twentieth century. The assumption hidden within these cultural dualisms has been the superiority of the masculine and the inferiority of the feminine. These beliefs have been so culturally pervasive, she argues, that the critic must explore their influence on women fiction writers. I would only add that understanding of any literature, whether by male or female authors, is greatly enhanced when the critic examines the relationship of the artist's world view to cultural ideologies on the nature of women and men.

Operating on the critical assumptions explained in the Barnes and Sukenick essays, Marcia Landy's "The Silent Women: Towards a Feminist Critique" does a good job of explaining how feminist critics have taken the tools of other schools of literary criticism—formalist, archetypal, psychoanalytic, semiotic, etc.—and applied them to the critical framework of feminist criticism. Although I found some of her specific discussions thoughtful (e. g. usefulness of Burke), I do think that others have categorized and described the wide range of feminist critical methodologies more clearly.¹ Her article could have made a greater contribution if she had addressed the theoretical issues implicit in the fact that feminist criticism, unlike many other schools, is not limited to a single methodology.

In general, the thirteen essays of practical criticism use the feminist issues of gender identity and role to deal with the established canon of literary tradition. The editors have presumably left to other anthologists the equally important task of resurrecting little known women writers and exploring the question of whether there is a distinct female tradition, style and imagery. Based mainly on textual and contextual analysis, these essays successfully demonstrate that full comprehension of these much studied authors is incomplete without some examination of how the artist handles the issue of gender.

The essays on Shakespeare, Richardson, Woolf and Hemingway rely heavily on formalist and thematic analysis to produce stimulating, new readings that challenge many prevailing critical views. Coppelia Kahn's "The Taming of the Shrew: Shakespeare's Mirror of Marriage" argues that Shakespeare is satirizing the machismo of a masculine mystique instead of celebrating the taming of a "shrew." Her creative approach can potentially bear fruit in future investigations of Shakespeare's androgynous tendencies. Katherine Roger's "Richardson's Empathy with Women" uses the author's sensitivity to the sexual and social repression of women as the critical scale on which to reverse the frequent preference of Fielding over Richardson. While her contention that Richardson is a "radical feminist" is not substantiated, she does convincingly show that Fielding reinforces the cultural norms which separate women into "good" and "bad" according to their acceptance of male control. Reexamined in the light of feminist categories, Richardson does recognize the repression of women and sympathetically portray women heroes who attempt

¹ See for example Annis Pratt's "The New Feminist Criticisms: Exploring the History of the New Space" in *Beyond Intellectual Sexism: A New Woman, A New Reality*, ed. by Joan Roberts (New York: David McKay, 1976) and Cheri Register's "American Feminist Literary Criticism: A Bibliographical Introduction" in *Feminist Literary Criticism: Explorations in Theory*, ed. by Josephine Donovan (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky, 1975).

to circumvent their condition. Lee Edward's "War and Roses: The Politics of *Mrs. Dalloway*" is an excellent rereading which challenges the frequently expressed charge that Woolf's celebration of Mrs. Dalloway's parties reflects the upper-middle class elitism and political naiveté of Bloomsbury. She argues that Woolf is simultaneously revaluing the feminine world usually deemed trivial and attacking the destructiveness of the masculine world of war and power which drives the sensitive Septimus to suicide. This approach would be equally fruitful in *To the Lighthouse*.

A second cluster of excellent essays on Chaucer (Diamond essay), Charlotte Brontë and Porter fuse careful readings of the text with analysis of the cultural and historical contexts. Arlyn Diamond's essay on Chaucer provides both a fine introduction to Chaucer's women for the non-Chaucerian scholar (translations would have been helpful, however) and a creative analysis of his work that should provide new research directions for Chaucerians. She examines the "marriage group" in *The Canterbury Tales* and argues that they demonstrate Chaucer's simultaneous reflection of and rebellion against the beliefs about women in his time. In "*Jane Eyre*: Woman's Estate," Maurianne Adams shows how greatly the historical context can illuminate the psychological dynamic of quest explored in the text. *Jane Eyre*, she demonstrates, abounds with Brontë's explicit references to role expectations for women, the economics of female dependence and the limited options open to women which characterized nineteenth-century England. These forces determine the boundaries and condition the dimensions of Jane's moral dilemmas. Adams's analysis of Jane's conflict between the needs for autonomy and love is excellent, and her discussion of Jane's dreams and fantasies is a particularly important contribution to the study of this novel.

In a category by itself, Dawn Lander's "Eve among the Indians" examines the psychological and political dimensions of the image of the frontier woman and contains the most brilliant and stimulating analysis in the book. In the mode of Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel*, she out-Fiedler's Fiedler as she shows his ideas to be part of the cultural mythologies he exposes. She argues that the dual myth of the pure white virginal wife/mother and the sexual dark-skinned minority woman served to divide light and dark women and to rationalize white male dominance in American history and culture. This article is one of the finest demonstrations I have seen of how racism and sexism are two sides of the same coin of oppression. Lander's biographical account of the genesis of her research is also illuminating as an explanation of the editor's title choice and the relation of "experience" to feminist criticism. Lander relates her own sense of freedom and love of wilderness that characterized her childhood on the desert. Her experience, she explains, went directly counter to the image of frontier white women in popular culture and led her to question whether women had really destroyed the wilderness with the values of "civilization." It is not her childhood feelings that ultimately convince, however. Rather, the "authority" of her own experience suggested new categories of analysis that shaped the direction of her extensive research. Feminist criticism in this volume does not argue that the authority of one individual's experience assures "objective" truth or even that the feminist

critic must be a woman. Instead, it implicitly demonstrates that experience as women has led to new "classificatory schema" that potentially illuminate formerly unfocused aspects of literature.

Like any anthology, the quality of the essays is not uniformly high. Maureen Fries's "Slydyng of Corage": Chaucer's Criseyde as Feminist and Victim," Mary Cohen's "Out of the chaos, a new kind of strength": Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*," and Priscilla Allen's "Old Critics and New: The Treatment of Chopin's *The Awakening*" are all surely competent, but they do not show the rich insight, creative rereadings, and suggestiveness of the other articles. The final essays stand out as problematical adaptations of feminist critical methodology. Patricia Barber's "What If *Bartleby* Were a Woman?" applies the "turn-around test" so often useful in the classroom to Melville's *Bartleby*. A hypothetical switch of the sex of characters can bring into sharp relief an author's hidden assumptions about sex roles and gender identity. But in this article, no new light is shed on our understanding of *Bartleby* by imagining the male clerk to be a female secretary. Miriam Lerenbaum's essay on Moll Flanders illustrates the dangers of using contextual material without subtlety. While her thesis that Moll is not a male hero in disguise is surely defensible, her use of historical and biological data ignores DeFoe as creator and awkwardly treats Moll as if she were an historical figure. For example, she argues that Moll's irritability in mid-life is due to the symptoms of menopause, an explanation somewhat reminiscent of the cruder forms of psychoanalytic criticism. Her suggestion that Moll's disinterest in her children is characteristic of the 18th century poor's indifference to the frequent deaths of their children has overtones which I am sure were unintended: racism and classism have frequently included the belief that darker and/or poorer peoples do not suffer as much with the high mortality rates brought on by poverty, poor nutrition and inadequate health care.

The occasionally weak essays in the volume in no way overshadow the unusually high quality of the rest. Diamond and Edwards have done an excellent job of producing a stimulating volume that not only serves as an introduction to feminist criticism, but also makes a contribution to the field itself. They are to be commended especially for providing so many fine essays on figures prior to the nineteenth century. The only thing that puzzles me is the tentativeness with which they and some of their contributors face the question of whether feminist criticism is a "school" or just an "approach." This volume affirms a consistent feminist critical perspective with categories of analysis distinct from other schools; the book operates with a variety of recognizable methodologies, derivative from other schools, but also distinct because of the analytic framework; and all essays tacitly express that this research does not exist in a vacuum, but emerges out of personal experience, a widespread political movement, the expanding phenomenon of Women's Studies, and the context of hundreds of other feminist critics. Feminist Criticism's visibility as a "school" is greatly enhanced by this volume, and future such publications will contribute greatly to the understanding of literature.

University of Wisconsin-Madison

SUSAN FRIEDMAN

A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing by Elaine Showalter. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977. Pp. viii + 378. \$17.50.

The City and the Veld: The Fiction of Doris Lessing by Mary Ann Singleton. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1977. Pp. 243. \$12.00.

Only recently have critics become fully aware that knowledge about women writers and therefore literary history itself is fragmentary and biased. Innumerable articles and some books from a feminist perspective have reinterpreted the achievements of well known women writers, reassessed the work of neglected ones, exposed the shortcomings of "phallic" criticism, and developed concepts useful for the theory and practice of feminist criticism. Meanwhile extensive and diverse new research about women in other disciplines has contributed to the need for intelligent synthesis of information about the work and experience of women writers.

Professor Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* provides such a synthesis and more. Unlike Ellen Moers's *Literary Women* (Doubleday, 1976), the earlier widely discussed study which took the implications of the gender of writers seriously, Showalter's book is an orderly, balanced, and highly readable account unmarred by awkward coinage (e. g., Moers's "Heroinism"), impressionistic organization, contradictions, and inadequate distinctions. Showalter's book can thus serve as a model for critics examining the work of women in other genres and historical periods. In addition, *A Literature of Their Own* is informative enough to be useful as a reference work, yet imaginative enough to invite continued reexamination and considerable controversy.

Professor Showalter rejects the notion of "a sense of collective identity of women writers" which might have produced a literary movement; she also dismisses the concept of a specifically female sensibility or imagination. Instead, she chooses "to describe a female literary tradition in the English novel and to show how the development of this tradition is similar to the development of any literary subculture."

Showalter identifies three distinct stages in "the female literary tradition [which] comes from the still-evolving relationships between women writers and their society." Imitation and internalization of the dominant male traditions produced the Feminine stage (1840-80); protest and advocacy of women's rights resulted in the Feminist phase (1880-1920); the search for and discovery of self is evident in the Female phase (1920-present).

One of the major strengths of this study is the order Showalter brings to a vast and complex body of material without oversimplification or contradiction. She provides informative discussion of innumerable writers besides Brontë, Eliot, Woolf, and Lessing. She makes further distinctions within the three major stages, so that neither common elements nor differences between writers and generations are slighted. She shows that the easy generalizations (e. g., women writers suffered from sexism; women writers opposing the

suffrage were unsympathetic to women) can be considerably refined by re-search and analysis to yield more complex yet more vividly convincing conclusions. Thus, for example, the chapters on "The Feminine Novelists and the Will to Write" and "The Double Critical Standard and the Feminine Novel" indirectly create sympathy and respect for those women who wrote for publication in spite of the critical standards used by both male and female reviewers, by both attackers and defenders. Even trends seemingly contrary to prevailing literary and social conventions are acknowledged and explicated as in the chapter on "Subverting the Feminine Novel: Sensationalism and Feminine Protest." In addition, Showalter often notes revealing continuities in the fiction of women: her striking comments on the function of the forcibly confined mad wife in *Jane Eyre* versus that of the mad wife who helps the protagonist gain essential knowledge in *The Four-Gated City* are just one example. The perceptive and tactful use Showalter makes of research from other disciplines to explicate the fiction and lives of writers constitutes another major strength.

Although *A Literature of Their Own* is clearly the best of recent studies dealing with several women writers, it is by no means the last word. Novels published in the first half of the roughly one-hundred and thirty years encompassed by the study receive proportionately fuller and more sympathetic treatment. Twentieth century novelists are dealt with in less than a hundred pages; of these about one-fifth are devoted to the writing from the suffrage movement which Showalter accurately evaluates as being historically interesting but aesthetically undistinguished. Many contemporary novelists whose achievements deserve more detailed examination (e. g., Rhys, Spark, O'Brien, Murdock) are passed over in a sentence or omitted altogether. Lessing and Drabble are rightfully treated at greater length, though even here one does not have the comfortable sense that Professor Showalter is as thoroughly familiar with the canon of modern women writers or as perceptive about their relationships to each other, to modern critical standards, or to current concepts of femininity as she is with the literature and society of nineteenth century.

The chapter "Virginia Woolf and the Flight into Androgyny" is likely to be the most controversial. It is undeniably appropriate to reexamine stringently the work and influence of a writer elevated to near-sainthood by feminists and feminist critics. Harriet Rosenstein similarly questioned the irrational admiration accorded to Plath, another suicide, by exposing the shortcomings of *The Bell Jar* and reaffirming the achievements of the poetry ("Reconsidering Sylvia Plath," *Ms.* 1, September, 1972, pp. 44-51). Her essay did much to begin a more balanced discussion by feminists of Plath's work. Showalter's refusal to see Woolf's "suicide as a beautiful act of faith, or a philosophical gesture toward androgyny" is a healthy corrective. Less convincing, however, is the ascription of Woolf's major breakdowns to "crises in female identity": menstruation, frigidity, childlessness, and menopause. While Professor Showalter says she has "no wish to substitute one magical explanation of her [Woolf's] anguish for another," she nevertheless does so implicitly by the full discussion of these crises and the reliance on Helen Deutsch's highly questionable analysis of female psychology.

While it is refreshing to see *Orlando* characterized by a particularly apt phrase ("tedious high camp"), it is more difficult to accept Showalter's argument that Woolf's "vision of womanhood is as dead as it is disembodied." This is especially true since *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* rather than the fiction are used as evidence more extensively. Even in these Showalter finds an unacceptable suppression of anger and withdrawal from life—"the ultimate room of one's own is the grave"—rather than a vision of the privacy and economic freedom essential to the woman writer. Woolf's work is thus too quickly once again dismissed as politically uninvolved, a label feminist critics have only recently begun to remove.

Even the suicidal, destructive, deadly influence Professor Showalter isolates needs further discussion. For example, the suicidal young man is by no means restricted to *Mrs. Dalloway*. As a contrast to the female protagonist he appears in other major modern novels: e. g., Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* and Drabble's *The Realms of Gold*. It can be argued that these novels echo an entirely different positive pattern evident in Woolf's work: an affirmation of life and triumphant survival by women rather than the attractiveness of death.

A Literature of Their Own is an impressive work that fully engages the attention of the reader. Any disagreements or reservations attest to its vitality and importance.

Far less can be said for Mary Ann Singleton's *The City and the Veld: The Fiction of Doris Lessing*. Devoted to a major contemporary writer, concerned with ideas and patterns, this study deals with an important subject. Professor Singleton sees Lessing's work as explicable by reference to three symbols or motifs: the veld, "the unconscious, physical world of nature"; the city, which "is half-evolved consciousness, the destructive fragmentation of partial awareness"; and the "ideal City...a hope for the future: the unified individual in a harmonious society."

Unfortunately this scene—often arbitrarily imposed—does not contribute much to a richer understanding of Lessing's work. Although some of the most obvious themes are discussed, Professor Singleton often ignores tone and context, misreads stories, or uses literary terms imprecisely. The study contains several contradictions and reveals a naiveté about distinctions between influences and parallels, fact and fiction, plot summary and analysis. The writing is too often careless and unclear. That Professor Singleton is unfamiliar with feminist criticism is perhaps forgivable. More serious is her neglect of previous critics whose work has particular relevance to her undertaking: Selma Burkorn, Lynn Sukenick, Mark Spilka. It is undeniable, however, that she has located three dominant motifs in Lessing's fiction.

Hopefully the continued interest in women writers will encourage additional analyses of Lessing's art and thought. Singleton and Showalter are absolutely right in seeing Lessing as a major contemporary writer.

University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

AGATE NESAULE KROUSE

Young Man Thoreau by Richard Lebeaux. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977. Pp. 256. \$12.50.

Relying heavily upon Eriksonian methodology, Richard Lebeaux presents a fresh, at times a quite personal interpretation of Thoreau in his pre-Walden years. Lebeaux argues that America's failure to supply suitable father figures as role models prompted Thoreau and his generation to be rebellious, to seek the new and to scorn the recent past, an act which engendered intense guilt feelings over the rejection of the father. In compensation, many young people of Thoreau's day strongly felt the impulse towards "generativity," towards supplying models of conduct to guide the next generation. Thirdly, the discovery of new, fitting models must be preceded by a long period of self-searching and introspection—Erikson's "moratorium"—which can in itself become a tempting model for the conduct of life. This last point may be the most fruitful because Lebeaux explicates the connection between this psychological concept and Thoreau's craft, particularly his hibernation imagery which sometimes metaphorically represents the poetic experience. Occasionally this book risks the danger of its methodology, and some statements verge on the tautological (p. 13), the simplistic (p. 9), or the hyperbolic (pp. 212-213), but on balance *Young Man Thoreau* ably demonstrates the benefits of applying the Eriksonian approach to literature.

HENRY GOLEMBE

Edward Bulwer-Lytton by Allan Conrad Christensen. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1977. Pp. xvii + 268. \$12.00.

Professor Christensen's declared aim is to establish a view of Bulwer as "dedicated artist rather than facile opportunist," but he achieves far more than that, for he has, in effect, redeemed Bulwer as a subject worthy of the most careful literary attention. After presenting a lucid and concise picture of Bulwer's personal and artistic assumptions, Christensen follows his career chronologically. He shows how Bulwer emphasizes first one side and then the other of the persistent opposition between the claims of personal identity and those of the common life. The highly self-conscious youthful novels are followed by the more objective novels of crime and society, the historical novels, and the middle-class Caxton stories; but Bulwer returns to a fascination with identity and self in his late novels. Between the early and late novels are his various experiments in balancing the duality he perceived in man's nature. "Roughly suggestive of the dialectic pattern of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis," Christensen says "the debate involves first the recognition and rejection of both the external and internal worlds and then the discovery of a realm that fuses aspects of the two."

By describing Bulwer's underlying beliefs in a guiding Deity, in a soul that longs for an ideal realm beyond materialism, and in the importance of bringing individual identity and common life into proportion, Christensen reveals an intellectual consistency and a hitherto unacknowledged artistic integrity in Bulwer's work. Bulwer emerges as an author fully conscious of his art, if not

always capable of fulfilling his expectations. Christensen further reveals how thoughtfully Bulwer dealt with such monumental themes as "the historical problem of evil" in what are often taken to be mere sensational novels, thereby suggesting that without some knowledge of Bulwer's aims and achievements, which were recognized and rewarded in his day, it is not possible to appreciate fully the works of other writers of the time, including Dickens, a theme that Christensen examines briefly in an "Afterword" entitled "The Influence of Bulwer-Lytton in His Own Times."

This gracefully written study is surely one of the finest examinations of Bulwer's literary achievement and it deserves attention from any scholar interested in the art of the novel and in nineteenth-century English literature.

JOHN R. REED

Wayne State University

Confinement and Flight: An Essay on English Literature of the Eighteenth Century by W. B. Carnochan. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977. Pp. xi + 212. \$10.95.

Writers of eighteenth-century England were obsessed with enclosure and escape. Carnochan's study is valuable not only because it reminds us of the ubiquity of these concerns, but because it does so by revealing their often surprising permutations and effects: how they worked changes on the traditions of the pastoral and the quest motif; how they informed prospect poetry and the Gothic novel; how totally, in fact, they were part of the thematic and rhetorical fabric of the literature of the age.

The enclosure haunting the writers, of course, was the enclosure of the self, a condition of being, suggests Carnochan, brought on when conceptions of an infinite universe replaced those of a closed world. Infinitude bred ambivalent feelings: on the one hand, writers cherished their imprisonment as a secure, fixed place in the frightening immensity of space; on the other, they hated their confinement and yearned to soar. When confinement did engender desires for flight, these too were experienced ambivalently, with joy at the sense of release but, more often, with fear and bitterness, for in the eighteenth century flight usually turned back to its starting point in the prison of the self and thus became an ironic reminder of limitation. Not only did the writers project their anxiety of confinement and fantasies of flight into their characters, into generic experiments, thematic material and plot structures, but, as they came to assess more fully the enclosures of mind, world and body, they radically redefined themselves as artists. Increasingly, the artists became more self-conscious, viewed their functions as diminished, sensed themselves as powerless and guilty watchers whose promise of release and coherence must be more modest; they began to toy with silence.

If this picture of the eighteenth-century artist seems similar to his tormented, obsessed and guilt-ridden counterpart of the twentieth century, the resemblance is intended by Carnochan, for whom most eighteenth-century works "seem like previsionary comments on our own fantastical lives." Indeed, the purpose

of the book is to make the eighteenth century our own, to demonstrate the "proposition... that writers throughout the English eighteenth century knew in their bones, if not always in their minds, that they lived in a new world." And so Carnochan uses the sensibilities of the new world to understand those of the old. Now, to sketch the past with the template of the present has certain advantages. For one, it allows us to get a purchase on what otherwise might have gone unnoticed, to see in nascent form patterns of ideas and feelings whose meanings and dynamics are fully clear only at a later stage in their development. And Carnochan puts modernity to good use in his discussions of *Robinson Crusoe*, *Tristram Shandy* and, especially, in his fine analysis of Samuel Johnson's mentality. But this use of modernity can lead—and often does in this book—to a serious danger: meanings may be seen which simply are not there. There are too many of these moments, and Carnochan abandons analysis for impressionistic argument, special pleading and tortuous over-reading, all of which put considerable strain on the texts. (In "A Satire Against Reason and Mankind," Rochester dismisses high-flying intellectual pursuits with the metaphor, "So charming ointments make an old witch fly/And bear a crippled carcass through the sky." Carnochan gives Rochester's rather straightforward contempt a decidedly twentieth-century significance: "It is as if [Rochester] had peered into the future and discovered the immense abyss of Berkeleyan space turning into the scene of obscure rites and strange secret horrors that Kepler never dreamed of, or Pascal's little cell turning into a Gothic torture chamber.") At his worse, as in his discussion of *The Beggar's Opera*, he becomes merely histrionic, making comments which are meant to be suggestive but which are so damnably elusive that any precise meaning wiggles out of our grasp.

But ultimately this is a frustrating book for another, though related, reason. In claiming the eighteenth century for the twentieth, Carnochan should have been more careful to keep in mind contexts, not so much to preserve the integrity of the age as to understand the evolving pressures which forced the present out of the past. To work it the other way around—to see the past exclusively in terms of the present—is hopelessly to muddle both. In spite of a solid thesis and a number of insights, *Confinement and Flight* is frustrating because it is so curiously groundless, at best cavalier toward historical contexts and particulars. For instance, although he shrewdly points out that isolation, an obsession with things and a growing passion for wordlessness are somehow related, he never says how and why they are, for he never goes into the roots of their relationship in the complicated context of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century debate over the nature of language, the growth of scientific ideology, and the trends of empiricism. And yet these are among the specific issues which affected Defoe and Swift and which, in their later historical development, bear upon Beckett and Joyce. In the end, one gets the impression that Carnochan sees history as a hothouse where the human sensibilities luxuriantly exfoliate themselves unaffected by the outside world. Such disregard for the historical environments of the present and the past seriously impoverishes the significance of both.

Wayne State University

DENNIS TODD

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The Un-Naming of the Beasts: The Postmodernity of Sartre's "La Nausée"

And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air; brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle and to fowl of the air and every beast of the fields....

Genesis 2: 19-20

Jean-Paul Sartre's novel *La Nausée* (1938) is one of the most problematic works of contemporary literature. This is not only because of the uncertainties of its meaning, but also—and more important—because of the uncertainties of its place in the chronology of "modernism." The discussion of these matters is so tangled that it is impossible to categorize it without grossly oversimplifying the issues at stake. It can be said, however—and this may be one of the fundamental sources of the uncertainty—that for a long time after the publication of *La Nausée*, the focus of critical interest fell rather heavily on its "existential" meaning. That is, early "criticism," assuming that the novel was radically autobiographical (i. e. that Sartre and Roquentin are virtually identical), disregarded the formal dimension, *more specifically the temporal process of the text*—to "explain" its philosophical significance and import. And since the primary thematic emphasis is on Roquentin's agonizing discovery of the viscous realm of existence, it was invariably concluded that Sartre's existentialism at the time of writing *La Nausée* was limited to a phenomenological description of the contingent realm of existence which is prior to essence, or, more fully, of the alienated, virtually solipsistic, consciousness of the terrible viscosity of the absurd world. This "philosophical" view, which dismisses or neglects as irrelevant Sartre's artistic in favor of his thematic concerns is given its most authoritative and influential expression by Iris Murdoch:

* William V. Spanos, Professor of English at SUNY-Binghamton, is the editor of *boundary 2* and the author of a number of articles on modern literature. He is completing a book on hermeneutics.

The interest of *La Nausée* does not lie in its conclusion, which is merely sketched in; Sartre has not developed it sufficiently for it even to pose as a solution to the problem. Its interest lies in the powerful image which dominates it, and in the descriptions which constitute the argument. These evocations of the viscous, the fluid, the paste-like, sometimes achieve a kind of horrid poetry, calling up in the reader—as do so many passages in the work of Sartre—*une espèce d'écoeurement douceâtre*, the sweetish sort of disgust which is one form of *la nausée* itself. Yet the effect is not always unpleasant. Sartre is much concerned with the real nature of perception. He dwells on the interpenetration of sensible qualities and on the unlikeness of what we “really see” to our dried-up concept of the visible world. We are invited to re-discover our vision. The things which surround us, usually quiet, domesticated and invisible, are seen suddenly as strange, seen as if for the first time.¹

In thus failing to develop the hermeneutic lead insisted on by the contrast between the inclusive “*Symboliste*” novel Roquentin intends to write in the “end”—the novel which will allow him to transcend “the sin of existence”—and the in-conclusive journal he in fact leaves behind, Ms. Murdoch, like most early commentators, concealed for a generation of readers, the fact that *La Nausée*, despite Sartre's vestigial metaphysical rhetoric, is ultimately a text about the art of fiction that calls previous modes of composition into question in behalf of a new, a post-Modern, novel.

More recently, however, a number of critics, probably under the pressure of a growing awareness of the influence of Sartre's novel on “postmodern” writers such as Beckett, Robbe-Grillet, Sarraute, Barth, Heller, Barthelme, Pynchon etc., and—more generally—of the aggressive insistence by contemporary writers and critics that the work of literary art is a reflection of the “world” they perceive or, as Sartre puts it, that “a fictional technique always relates back to the novelist's metaphysics,”² have begun to comment on *La Nausée* as novel and to suggest its place in the tangled landscape of modern literature. Unfortunately, these critics have approached Sartre's art from a broadly Modernist hermeneutic perspective. They assume,

¹ Iris Murdoch, *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 9-10. See also pp. 12 and 13.

² Jean-Paul Sartre, “On the Sound and the Fury: Time in the Work of William Faulkner,” *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, tr. Annette Michelson (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), p. 79.

that is, the ontological priority of Form (Being) over process (temporality) and thus, as I intend to show, are blinded by their insight to the post-Modern impulse behind Sartre's refusal of closure, or, more accurately, behind his transformation of closure (the circular narrative) into openness (what Heidegger, after Kierkegaard, calls repetition). Conditioned by the traditional expectation of formal unity, these critics pick up Roquentin's "aesthetic solution," which Ms. Murdoch with some justification, but in the end mistakenly, dismisses as "simply a sketch of a solution" that Sartre "is patently uninterested in,"³ and develop its implications to conclude with unwarranted finality that *La Nausée* is a novel whose form is determined by a metaphysics which is prior to Sartre's "radical conversion" and his analogous theory of *littérature engagée*. They conclude, more specifically, that the novel belongs to the early Modernist tradition.⁴ Thus, for example, Michael Edwards rejects the claim that *La Nausée* "is offered only as the record of a progressive *destruction* of meaning,"⁵ and after a provocative but all too brief demonstration of its "Symbolist techniques" concludes that

La Nausée offers not only a discussion of what should be recognized as a Symbolist aesthetic, but also its embodiment. It seeks to justify, as so many works in the Romantic-Symbolist tradition, the imagination, without naming it. It is a fable reflecting upon

³ Murdoch, *Sartre*, pp. 12-13.

⁴ For most of these critics *engagement* means political activism. Thus they find their primary justification for assigning *La Nausée* to early Modernist literature in the fact that there is no overt political activism in the novel. They fail to perceive that the call to politics is a secondary extension of a more radical engagement, that which Sartre, borrowing from Heidegger's monistic understanding of Dasein as Being-in-the-world (*in-der-Welt-Sein*), refers to as *homme-dans-le-monde*. See, for example, A. James Arnold, "La Nausée Revisited," *French Review*, 39 (1965), pp. 199-213. Arnold uses recent autobiographical and biographical sources—"Les Mots, La Force de l'âge, and those of Sartre's other works which are roughly contemporary with *La Nausée* [*L'Imagination* (1936) and *L'Imaginaire* (1940)]—that refer to Sartre's apolitical and/or aesthetic leanings at the time of writing *La Nausée* to conclude that the novel is a product of an earlier pre-*engagée* Sartre, who posits the saving "rigorous necessity of art" (p. 203). "Some critics have treated *La Nausée* as though it were the work of a later Sartre, the author of *Qu'est-ce la littérature?* The publication of Simone de Beauvoir's *La Force de l'âge* in 1960 [and *Les Mots* in 1964] preclude the possibility of any further speculation of that nature" (p. 199).

⁵ Michael Edwards, "La Nausée—A Symbolist Novel," *Adam* (1971), p. 17.

and attempting to manifest the saving otherness of artifice. From that perspective, its context is not that in which it is habitually placed. It is closer to Yeats's Byzantium that [sic] to Camus' *L'Etranger*.⁶

Similarly, though more aware of an ambiguity in Roquentin's final conceptual triumph over existence, Edith Kern says that Sartre's novel emerges from German Romanticism, especially from the tradition of the *Künstlerroman*, the tradition, that is, of the hero as author/poet. In this tradition, which according to Ms. Kern has its fullest philosophical expression in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* and its ultimate artistic achievement in Modernist writers such as Gide, Woolf, Joyce, and especially Marcel Proust, *Form*—the will to power over existence that manifests itself as the reification or, as I prefer to put it, the spatialization of process—becomes a “redemption” of life in its ability to “lift us,” as Nietzsche says, “above the whirl of shifting phenomena.”⁷ As Ms. Kern observes:

If we turn our attention . . . to Sartre, his indebtedness to his two French predecessors, Gide and Proust, becomes only too obvious. Indeed, when writing *Nausea*, he may well have been acquainted with some of the great *Künstlerromane* written in other languages, such as Rilke's *Malte Laurids Brigge*, some of Thomas Mann's or Herman Hesse's novels, James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*, or even Virginia Woolf's work—all showing a revival of Romantic notions of the artist infused with Nietzschean concepts. There can be no doubt that the Sartrean author-hero Roquentin [the ultimate equation of Sartre and Roquentin is of crucial importance], shown in the process of becoming an artist, is the poet looking at himself in the act of creation and becoming cognizant of the essence of art.⁸

⁶ Edwards, “*La Nausée*,” p. 21. Edwards' contrasting of *La Nausée* with Camus' *L'Etranger* rather than, say, with Samuel Beckett, Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute, Iris Murdoch, or Thomas Pynchon, makes it clear that his historical context is not that centered on the modern/postmodern question.

⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, tr. Francis Golffing (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1956), p. 102.

⁸ Edith Kern, *Existential Thought and Fictional Technique: Kierkegaard, Sartre, Beckett* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 82-83. Miss Kern is quick to observe, however, that Roquentin is also different from Nietzsche's Dionysiac poet and Proust's Marcel: Roquentin's “turning away [‘from the lawlessness and absurdity of existence towards the order and abstractness of geometry and music’] is ambiguous because unlike Rilke and Proust, Sartre [the identification of author and protagonist is worthy of note] does not wish

This retrieval of the "art" of *La Nausée* from the purely philosophical speculation which has had a strange hold on the novel constitutes a genuine, if all too belated, breakthrough in the study of Sartre as literary artist. But it is, I think, partial. For the momentum generated by the philosophical autobiographical readings of *La Nausée*—and enforced by the Modernist aesthetic expectations of formal unity—has been so great, it seems, that Sartre's philosophy continues to determine largely the aesthetic interpretation; that is, these critics still tend to *assume* all too easily that Roquentin and Sartre are ultimately identical, that the kind of novel Roquentin promises to write is—in one way or another—the kind which Sartre has written as *La Nausée*. This is clearly suggested by the fact that neither Ms. Kern nor Edwards, despite their acknowledgement of the analogy between metaphysics and fiction, concentrates on describing *Roquentin's* achieved aesthetics. Thus neither gets much beyond commenting about aspects of technique to look closely at the crucial "form," the time-process, of Sartre's fiction, of *La Nausée* itself. As a result, they have failed to perceive just below its traditional formal and linguistic surface the enormous importance—indeed, the "centrality"—of *La Nausée* in the emergence in our time of a Western literature that exists, in Heidegger's term, to "overcome" the autotelic bias of Modernist form. To appropriate Paul de Man's phrase, they have been blinded by their formalist insight to the *post-Modern* impulse behind Sartre's ultimate refusal of closure or, more specifically, behind his transformation of closure (the circular narrative of *La Nausée* and its rhetoric) into dis-closure or openness (what, as we shall see, Heidegger, after Kierkegaard, calls repetition or retrieval: *wiederholen*).

As Heidegger and, after him, Jacques Derrida have made persuasively clear, every "revolutionary" writer, that is, every writer seeking to return "to the things themselves," to begin again without recourse to absolute origins, is inevitably the victim in some degree of the epistemological assumptions informing (concealed in) the

to transfigure reality into poetic inwardness. While his author-hero, Roquentin, wants to rid the passing moments of their fat, he also wants to emerge as consciousness-in-the world" (p. 127). Since, as the passage suggests, Miss Kern ultimately sees Roquentin and Sartre as the same person, we must assume that the novel *La Nausée* is analogously different from Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Nevertheless, she minimizes, indeed, virtually dismisses, this difference in her interpretation of the novel in favor of the Dionysiac or Symbolist Sartre-Roquentin.

language he inherits from the past. This is an especially important consideration in the interpretation of contemporary literary texts in which the metaphysical or, in Derrida's term, "logocentric" language the "author" receives from the Western Tradition no longer applies to the decentered ontological situation it confronts—the situation, for example, that Sartre describes phenomenologically in the park scene of *La Nausée*—and thus tends to cover up or close off precisely what it would reveal.⁹ To *dis-cover* or *dis-close* what

* The term "logocentric" is Derrida's. But it derives fundamentally from Heidegger's "de-struction" (*Destruction*) of the Greek word *logos* as it has been increasingly defined by the Western philosophical tradition (that is, as "reason," "judgment," "concept," "definition," "ground," or "relationship," and more inclusively, as "the Word," "the One," the "Unmoved Mover," the "Final Cause," etc. Such a destruction of *logos* dis-covers that its primordial meaning, as its derivation from *legein* suggests, is "talk," "discourse" (*Rede*), that *logos*, in other words, is "grounded" in the unconcealing/concealing rhythms of temporal being-in-the-world. According to Heidegger, the hardened Western interpretation of *logos* as *ratio* in Aristotle's sentence defining man as *ζῷον λόγον ἔχον*, constitutes a reification or centering and thus an immobilizing of the temporality (Nothingness, the circle as absence) of being-in-the-world in order to secure *Dasein* against the *Angst* of contingency (the dread or anxiety that has no-thing as its object). (*Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, 7th ed. [New York: Harper and Row, 1962], section 7, p. 55; section 5, p. 47. Further references will be incorporated in the text in parentheses). As Derrida puts this impulse to presence/absence in his influential essay "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Languages of Sciences of Man*, ed. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1972):

The concept of centered structure is in fact the concept of a freeplay based on a fundamental ground, a freeplay which is constituted upon a fundamental immobility and a reassuring certitude, which is itself beyond the reach of freeplay. With this certitude anxiety can be mastered, for anxiety is invariably the result of a certain mode of being implicated in the game, of being caught by the game, of being as it were from the very beginning at stake in the game. From the basis of what we therefore call the center (and which, because it can be either inside or outside, is as readily called the origin as the end, as readily *arché* as *telos*), the repetitions, the substitutions, the transformations, and the permutations are always *taken* from a history of meaning [*sens*]*—*that is, a history, period—whose origin may always be revealed or whose end may always be anticipated in the form of presence (p. 248).

Derrida departs from his source in claiming that Heidegger's dis-covering of speech as origin in his destruction of *logos* constitutes a reappropriation of metaphysics. Despite his explicit disavowal of any such intention ("La double séance,"

Sartre was actually driving towards but finally left unsaid or, to put it in another way, to retrieve *La Nausée* for a post-Modern audience from the (Modernist) tradition in which its commentators, by way of acknowledging Sartre's vestigial humanism, have buried

La dissémination [Paris: Editions du Seuil 1972], p. 207), Derrida (and even more so his followers) in practice posits writing (*écriture*), not speech (*parole*), as the agency par excellence for the expression of untethered "freeplay" occasioned by the acknowledgement of a "decentered" universe. In this, Derrida, I think, fails to adequately distinguish between Heidegger's understanding of speech as "grounded" in Dasein's temporality (Nothingness), i. e. as open-ended dialogue, and that Western tradition culminating in Husserl, which sees oral expression as the essential agency of centeredness or presence, as "oracular" discourse. In thus valorizing writing over speech Derrida justifies, if he does not in fact commit himself to, the view, mistaken I believe, taken by Paul de Man that all literary texts (*écriture*) are by the very nature of their textuality "fictions" and thus immune to logocentric self-mystification. (See Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Blindness" and, especially, "Criticism and Crisis," *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* [New York: Oxford University Press 1971], pp. 3-19). Further, Derrida's equation of writing with the Nietzschean version of repetition and freeplay tends to revalorize adjacencies over against process, wholes over against parts, and thus the spatial (aesthetic) poetry of the Modernist imagination, what Kierkegaard would call variously the poetry of "infinite negativity" or "unmastered irony." It is early Modernists like Mallarmé and Valéry that Derrida and his followers admire, poets who, despite Derrida's insistence that they call into question the essential grounds of Western metaphysics, are nevertheless always obsessed by the stabilizing possibilities of spatial models in their agonized encounter with the elusive temporality of words. Ironically, this emphasis on adjacencies (synchronicity) and early Modernists whose texts reflect them tends to obscure the post-Modern impulse of contemporary literary experimentation in dis-closive or destructive (open) forms to retrieve a radically temporal perceptual stance, i. e. to defer presence. I am thinking especially of poets like William Carlos Williams, Charles Olson, and Robert Creeley, whose "projective" or "open" verse is "grounded" in the speech act, not oracular utterance (the utterance of a seer) but, in Robert Creeley's phrase, as "the measure of its occasion" (from *occasus* and, ultimately, *cadere*), meaning, as being-in-the-world does for Heidegger, the dispersed measure of a "fallen" world in what presence is infinitely deferred. In using the term "logocentric," therefore, I am following Heidegger's understanding of *logos* rather than Derrida's and the Derridean deconstructors, though I wish to acknowledge a substantial debt to the latter, especially to Derrida's essay, "Differance," *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, tr. David Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp. 129-160.

My argument against Derridean deconstruction in behalf of a Heideggerian

the novel, it will be necessary to undertake a "de-struction" of the text.¹⁰ By this term I do not, of course, mean "annihilation." I mean, rather, a hermeneutic project grounded in an understanding of truth not as *adequatio intellectus et rei*, but as *a-letheia*—bringing into the open from hiddenness or oblivion (BT, 7, 57)—and assuming the form of a de-struction—a dis-assembling by violence of a *spatial* figure—such as that which Heidegger undertakes *vis-à-vis* Kantian metaphysics and beyond that the systematic philosophy of what he has called the Western "onto-theo-logical tradition":

If the question of Being is to have its own history made transparent, then this hardened tradition must be loosened up, and the concealments which it has brought about must be dissolved. We understand this task as one in which by taking *the question of Being* [*Seinsfrage*: better translated as "the question of what it means to be"] as *our clue*, we are to destroy the traditional content of ancient ontology [*sich vollziehende Destruktion des überlieferten Bestandes der antiken Ontologie*] until we arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being—the ways which have guided us ever since.

In thus disclosing the origins of our ontological concepts, we do not relativize ontology; nor does this destruction negate the ontological tradition.

We must, on the contrary, stake out the positive possibilities of that tradition, and this always means keeping it within its *limits*; these in turn are given factually in the way the question is formulated at the time, and in the way the possible field for investigation is thus bounded off. On the negative side, this destruction does not relate itself towards the past; its criticism is aimed at "today" and at the prevalent way of treating the history of ontology. . . . But to bury the past in nullity [*Nichtigkeit*] is not the purpose of this destruction; its aim is *positive*, its negative function remains unexpressed and indirect (BT 6, 44).

destruction is, of course, hardly adequate. On the other hand, a fuller treatment of the issue would have drawn the focus away from my essential subject, Sartre's *La Nausée*. Nevertheless this note points to a difference that many Derrideans (though not Derrida himself) do not seem to be aware of and should suggest the direction a more ample discussion might take.

¹⁰ The term *Destruktion* (destruction) which has been appropriated as "deconstruction" by Jacques Derrida and his followers, is Heidegger's. This crucial fact needs emphasis in the face of the authority that "deconstruction" is beginning to achieve.

A destruction of *La Nausée* will not thus constitute a critique of the novel nor of its received interpretations. It will not attempt to bury it in nullity; it will make it authentically *our own*. "In proposing our 'definition' of 'truth' [as *a-letheia*]," Heidegger says elsewhere, "we have not *shaken off* the tradition, but we have *appropriated* it primordially" (BT 44, 262). A destruction of Sartre's novel, in other words, will involve a wresting by hermeneutic "violence" of what it and both the philosophical and literary Modernist interpretations of it necessarily leave unsaid—of the "positive possibilities" concerning the being of the text covered up by the hardened Western literary tradition and its received rhetorics in which Sartre and, much more so, his interpreters continue to exist. What these positive possibilities are is suggested by analogy in the concluding paragraph of Heidegger's definition of the destruction:

In line with the positive tendencies of this destruction, we must in the first instance raise the question whether and to what extent *the Interpretation of Being and the phenomenon of time have been brought together thematically in the course of the history of ontology*, and whether the problematic of *Temporality required for this has ever been worked out in principal or even could have been*. (BT 5, 45. My emphasis.)

More specifically, then, a destruction of *La Nausée* will require a *dis-covering* or *dis-closing* of the be-ing of the novel covered over or closed off from view and thus forgotten by the spatial-izing hermeneutics—the hermeneutics which, like its philosophical counterpart, perceives *meta-ta-physika*: from after or above or beyond things-as-they-are—of the Western literary tradition that culminates in the Modernist (New Critical and Structuralist) poetics of ironic in-elusiveness.

In this de-structive re-examination of Sartre's *La Nausée*, therefore, I want to make the claim that the novel is not, as, say, Edwards and Kern insist, "influenced" by or "indebted" to the anti-positivist Symbolist novel. Whatever its original intention, or, more accurately, whatever Sartre's recollection of his original intention, *La Nausée*, unlike the novel *Roquentin* visualizes, can now be understood as a demystification of *both* formal poles of the binary Western literary tradition. To put it more immediately, it can be understood as constituting a de-struction of the logocentric structure not only of the "well-made piece" which embodies the positivistic/totalitarian metaphysics of the European middle class, but also, if less obviously,

the "spatial form" of the *Symboliste* tradition (including the Romantic/Modernist *Künstlerroman*) which images forth the idealistic or "angelistic" metaphysics of the early Modernists, in order to release or dis-close the "being" in-closed in these forms. I want to show, by way of wresting by hermeneutic violence the essential being of the novel from the hold that the language of the Western literary tradition still has on Sartre's imagination, that *La Nausée* ultimately aligns itself against the well-made fiction not with the mainstream of Modernism—with the consoling or "angelic" formal perfections, the "infinite negativities," as Kierkegaard would put it, of Proust, of Mallarmé, of the early Yeats, of Joyce, of Virginia Woolf—but rather with the dislocating and liberating formal "imperfections" of Kierkegaard's *Repetition*, of Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, of Kafka's *The Trial*, of Robert Musil's *Man Without Qualities*, and, above all, of Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*. I want to show, in other words, that *La Nausée* does not ultimately look back, from the vantage point of the late 1930's, to an already triumphant—and rigidifying—early species of "Modernism," but forward, by way of repetition, to that thrust of post-Modern "anti-art" which, under the influence, above all, of the existential phenomenology of Husserl, of Merleau-Ponty, and especially of Heidegger, attempts to destroy received forms to return *zu den Sachen selbst*, "to the things themselves,"¹¹ to dis-cover (on the ontological, if not overtly on the political level) the authentic temporal experience, the historicity (not history), of modern man that the metaphysics of both the *Symboliste* art object and the *pièce bien faite* has covered over and forgotten.

To accomplish this, I will not attempt to confront the tangled commentary head on, a project which, besides being impossibly complicated, would generate a digression from my primary purpose: to show that Sartre's *La Nausée* exists on the margin, the boundary, between Modernism and Postmodernism and thus to make explicit its importance for our understanding of the crisis of literature and criticism and how it is being confronted. Rather, I will proceed directly to the text—enter the hermeneutic circle "wholly and primordially"—to undertake a destructive interpretation of the relationship between Roquentin's *temporal experience*, which traces a "cir-

¹¹ The term is Edmund Husserl's and stands as the essential project of the unmethodical phenomenological "method." See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.

cuitous journey" and "ends" in his decision to write a Modernist (spatial) novel, and the problematic "form," the "circular" structure, of Sartre's *La Nausée*, commenting in the process on what strikes me as the most significant problems raised by other critics of the text.

II

Sartre's *La Nausée* is about an uprooted and sensitive, but essentially ordinary young man, Antoine Roquentin, now "living"—like the outcast protagonist of Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*—in one of "the most abstract and intentional cities in the whole world"¹² (Bouville, which is easily recognizable as the prosperous seaport city of Le Havre) and trying desperately to finish a definitive or, better, a *conclusive* biography of a certain Marquis de Rollebon, who flourished rather melodramatically during the period of the French Revolution. What he in fact writes or, rather, leaves behind, after his experience has come full circle, is an intensely introspective and *inconclusive* journal that, in recording his futile attempt to arrive at conclusions about what at first seemed to be an attractive life of action, also records paradigmatically modern man's futile attempt to arrive at conclusions about his being-in-the-world.

It is an experience at the seashore (which could not "ordinarily be called an event"¹³) that activates this process of disintegration. In a playful mood, Roquentin picks up a pebble to throw into the sea, but suddenly drops it because he feels "a sort of sweetish sickness," "a sort of nausea," pass "from the stone to his hand" (p. 20). After this, he tries to avert such terrifying occasions by concentrating on the safe external linear geometry of his biography and by seeking out the refuge of cafes which "were full of people and well lighted" (p. 29)—the influence of Ernest Hemingway's great story about the corrosive darkness of *Nada* is pervasive in *La Nausée*.¹⁴ But the invading element has broken through his defenses and the *magical*

¹² Fedor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground* and *The Legend of The Grand Inquisitor*, tr. Ralph E. Matlaw (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1960), p. 6.

¹³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, tr. Lloyd Alexander (New York: New Directions, 1959), p. 7. Further references will be to this edition (though I will interpolate the original French from *La Nausée* [Paris: Gallimard, 1938] wherever the translation seems to warrant it) and will be incorporated in the text in parentheses.

¹⁴ See also, pp. 98, 103, 110. In the latter, Roquentin, in the library, refers to the "refuge" from "this day of menace" provided by the "lucid Italy of Stendhal" (*The Charterhouse of Parma*, of course).

efforts to exorcise its existence or, better, to stay its motion, in the interim between visitations by writing "Rien de nouveau" (Nothing new) in his journal (pp. 13, 18) is futile. Indeed, as another reading of the phrase suggests, it is a measure of its menacing and immanent presence. "*I must not be afraid*" (p. 97), he writes on the Wednesday following his Sunday among the middle class strollers after the encounter between Dr. Rogé and M. Achille. And, as if this entry unleashes the dreaded thing, the "invasion" assumes larger proportions. At first he associates the menace with the miasmic fog enveloping the city, which "filtered in under the door" of the Café Mably and threatened "to rise slowly and penetrate everything" (p. 101). But later during the day—after he has sought the refuge of the library, the modern storehouse—or arsenal—of words or, better, of names—he perceives it as an ontological fog that permeates the city:

Fog has filled the room [envahi la pièce]; not the real fog, that had gone a long time ago—but the other, the one the streets were still full of, which came out of the walls and pavements: the inconsistency of inanimate objects! The books were still there, arranged in alphabetical order on the shelves with their brown and black backs and their labels *UP* lf. 7.996 But . . . how can I explain it? Usually, powerful and squat, along with the stove, the green lamps, the wide windows, the ladders, they dam up the future [endiguant l'avenir] Thus these objects serve at least to fix the limits of probability.

Today they fixed nothing at all [ils ne fixaient plus rien du tout]

I got up. I could no longer keep my place [ne pouvais plus tenir en place] in the midst of these unnatural objects. I went to the window and glanced out at the skull of Impétraz to whom I will return. I murmured: *Anything* can happen, *anything*. [Tout peut se produire, tout peut arriver]. . . .

Frightened, I looked at these unstable beings which, in an hour, in a minute, were perhaps going to crumble; yes, I was there [j'étais là], living in the midst of these books full of knowledge describing the immutable forms of the animal species, explaining that the right quantity of energy is kept integral in the universe; I was there, standing in front of a window whose panes had a definite refraction index. But what feeble barriers! I suppose it is out of laziness that the world is the same day after day. Today it seemed to want to change. And then, *anything*, *anything* could happen (pp. 105-106).

The threat subsides at the end of "cette journée menaçante" (this day of menace) (p. 110), but these occasions become increasingly numerous and powerful as Roquentin (clearly Sartre's Dasein: being there) becomes more and more isolated from others until, against his will, he is finally driven into confronting this new, insistent and terrible reality.

Roquentin's reluctant encounter with the "unheard of thing," as Tolstoy, one of Sartre's precursors, puts the threat of ontological invasion in *The Death of Ivan Ilych*,¹⁵ occurs, significantly, in the public park of this methodical city (paradoxically named Bouville: city of mud) shortly after his discovery of the self-deceptive fraudulence of the Self-Taught Man's anthropomorphic humanism.¹⁶ By way of what might be called the phenomenological reduction by violence, Roquentin perceives in a blinding revelation—I'm tempted to say "epiphany" to suggest his destruction (however incomplete, as we shall see) of the logocentric language of the ontotheological tra-

¹⁵This crucial allusion to Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* which recurs several times in the early entries of Roquentin's journals (see pp. 11 and 13 and especially 18, 29, and 97) should not be missed. Just as Ivan's old habits of mind, his impulse to "arrange" novelty into familiarity, cannot domesticate this "unheard-of thing." *The Death of Ivan Ilych and Other Stories*, tr. Aylmer Maude, with an "Afterword" by David Magershack (New York: The New American Library, 1960), (p. 126), which has intruded into his "pleasant and decorous" life, so Roquentin's earlier objective mental habits cannot habituate this novel phenomenon (the nausea), which has invaded his existence. The *new* in both cases becomes ontological (i. e., Nothingness) and, like the Furies to which Tolstoy alludes, must be encountered face to face.

¹⁶In taking the form of reading the books in the library in alphabetical order, the Self-Taught man's reductive humanistic educational project reminds us of Mr. Ramsey's futile rationalist quest for total knowledge in *To the Lighthouse*, which he externalizes in terms of the metaphor of the alphabet. Behind Woolf, of course, is Bergson's critical analysis of the positivistic intelligence, which, in order to "forecast and measure," "spatializes" duration (*durée réelle*): "when we turn to our conscious states, [our practical selves] we have everything to gain by keeping up the illusion through which we make them share in the reciprocal externality of outer things, because this distinctness, and at the same time this solidification, enables us to give them fixed names in spite of their instability, and distinct ones in spite of their interpenetration. It enables us to objectify them, to throw them out into the current of social life." *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, tr. F. L. Pogson (New York: Macmillan, 1910), p. 231. The aesthetic (fictional) analogue of the Self-Taught man's spatialization of knowledge is embodied, as we shall see, in Roquentin's distinction between living and recounting life. See pp. 56-58.

dition and the visual metaphors it has employed to express understanding since Plato—the full significance of what has been happening to his consciousness of the world:

I push open a gate, go in, airy creatures are bounding and leaping and perching on the peaks. Now I recognize myself, I know where I am: I'm in the park. [*Je suis au Jardin public.*] I drop onto a bench between great black tree-trunks, between the black, knotty hands reaching towards the sky. A tree scrapes at the earth under my feet with a black nail. I would like to let myself go, forget myself, sleep. But I can't, I'm suffocating: existence, penetrates me everywhere, through my eyes, the nose, the mouth. . . .

And suddenly, suddenly the veil is torn away, I have understood, I have *seen*. [*le voile se déchire, j'ai compris, j'ai vu.*]

What happens in this "mystical moment" in the park-garden when, as Heidegger would put it, "the referential surface is ruptured,"¹⁷ is radically antithetical to what happens in Genesis 2: 18-20. In the Old Testament myth, Adam's archetypal act of naming is a teleological or logocentric establishment of a prior hierarchical ontological order that transforms a proliferating and unstable abundance into an ordered and permanent plenitude, a paradisaical garden, thus subduing the threat (and possibilities) of nothingness. By thus naming the beasts, the Old Adam brings to a decisive conclusion the creation of the Garden of Eden and establishes the authorizing paradigm of the language/existent relationship in the ontological tradition. Put in post-lapsarian terms, to include time as well as space, to *name* is to impose an ideal causal or formal order on the contingencies of temporal existence from the end (*meta-ta-physika*). To name, in other words, is to com-*pose*, to dramatize, in the sense of spatializing—and aesthetically distancing—time. In the language of the onto-theological tradition, to name is to re-collect (in tranquillity) the dispersed (fallen) and undifferentiated One which is process so that all time—its differences or, to appropriate Derrida, its *différance* (that temporal defer-al of presence which generates the desire or

¹⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Sect. 16, pp. 102-107. According to Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutics, it is when the instrument (whether hammer or epistemological method) breaks down or, more broadly, when "a break occurs in the total referential surface" (*Bruch der Verweisungszusammenhänge*, p. 105), that the primordial being closed off to understanding by the "everyday" perspective of *das Man*—what John Vernon aptly calls the map consciousness—is made explicit, is dis-closed.

interest [Kierkegaard] or care [Heidegger] that "makes a difference") can be *seen* simultaneously, as presence (or identity), as it was *seen* in the "beginning", i. e. from an aesthetic distance.¹⁸ In *La Nausée*, on the other hand, Roquentin reluctantly becomes precisely the anti-Adam. The *Logos as ratio*, the privileged instrument of rational language, has broken down. In a tram before his arrival in the park, he had thought of the disintegrating object that his word "seat" "refused to go and put itself on": "Les choses se sont délivrées de leurs noms... je suis au milieu de Choses, les innommables." (Things are divorced from their names... I am in the midst of things, nameless things.) Sitting now on a bench in the bourgeois Eden, the New Adam looks on in fascinated horror, divested (like Lear) of the verbal power to reverse the process, as nature completes her grotesque unnamings. As a cultivated fragment of wild nature, the *Jardin public* (Sartre capitalizes the French word) is, along with the city (to which I will return), a radical archetype of the power of the Word (*logos*), divine or human, to establish distancing points of reference in chaos (a map) or, to shift the metaphor slightly, to civil-ize (at-home) and domesticate the "bestial" energies in the world.¹⁹ For the New Adam, his language as tool broken, the garden now returns to its "primordial" state—centerless, without origins—of "viscosity", to that dispersed and different Ur-realm that Heidegger calls *die Unheimliche* (the uncanny or, etymologically, the not-at-home) and that Sartre, borrowing from Heidegger, was to formulate later on as the existence which is ontologically prior to essence:

So I was in the park just now. The roots of the chestnut tree were sunk in the ground just under my bench. I couldn't remember it was a root anymore. *The words had vanished and with them the significance of things, their methods of use, and the feeble points of reference which men have traced on their surface.* [Les mots s'étaient évanouis et, avec eux, la signification des

¹⁸ Jacques Derrida, "Différance," *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, pp. 129-160.

¹⁹ Roquentin refers several times to objects in their unnamed state as bestial: "I am afraid of being in contact with them [objects that no longer keep their place] as though they were living beasts" (p. 19); "I am these two beasts struggling at the end of my arms" (p. 139); "I was sitting, stooping forward, head bowed, alone in front of this black, knotty mass, entirely beastly, which frightened me" (p. 171); "I sank down on the bench, stupefied stunned by this profusion of being without origin..." (pp. 178-179).

choses, leurs modes d'emploi, les faibles reperès que les hommes ont traces à leur surface.] I was sitting, stooping forward, head bowed, alone in front of the black, knotty mass, entirely beastly [brute], which frightened me. *Then I had this vision.* [Et puis, j'ai eu cette illumination.]

It left me breathless. Never, until these last few days, had I understood the meaning of "existence". I was like the others [the Bouvillois], like the ones walking along the seashore, all dressed in their spring finery [leur habits de printemps]. I said, like them, "The Ocean is green; that white speck up there is a seagull," but I didn't feel that it existed or that the seagull was an "existing seagull"; usually existence hides itself. . . . Even when I looked at things, I was miles from dreaming that they existed: they looked like scenery to me. . . . And then all of a sudden, there it was, clear as day: existence had suddenly unveiled itself [l'existence s'était soudain dévoilée]: it had lost the harmless look of an abstract category . . . the roots, the park gates, the bench, the sparse grass, all that had vanished: the diversity of things, their individuality, were only an appearance, a veneer. This veneer had melted, leaving soft, monstrous masses, all in disorder—naked, in a frightful, obscene nakedness.

. . . But faced with this great wrinkled paw [he is referring to the root of the chestnut tree], neither ignorance nor knowledge was important: the world of explanations and reasons is not the world of existence. A circle is not absurd, it is clearly explained by the rotation of a straight segment around one of its extremities. But neither does a circle exist. This root, on the other hand, existed in such a way that I could not explain it. Knotty, inert, nameless, it fascinated me, filled my eyes, brought me back unceasingly to its own existence. In vain to repeat: "This is a root"—it didn't work any more [ça ne prenait plus]. . . . This root, with its colour, shape, its congealed movement, was . . . *below all explanation.* Each of its qualities escaped it a little, flowed out of it, half solidified, almost became a thing. . . . (pp. 170-174, my emphasis)

With the collapse of his anthropomorphic or "humanistic" frame of reference, his Adamic power to name—and distance—the world, Roquentin's world as map—"the feeble points of reference which men have traced on their [things'] surface"—disintegrates and disperses. He now discovers that this primordial existence is what he calls at one point "absurdity" (p. 173) and at another, "contingency" (p. 176). In this *Ur*-realm disclosed by the rupture of the referential surface all causal relationships between objects and between events

which make existence One, break down into multiplicity. Roquentin can no longer "count" (*compter*) the chestnut trees in the park nor "locate" (*situer*) them in relation to other objects. Each escapes his agonized effort to "enclose" it: "Chacun d'eux s'échappait des relations ou je cherchais à l'enfermer, s'isolait débordait." Prior to his experience he had felt himself "to be the arbitrator" or, to use a metaphor to which I will return, the privileged *author*, of these unifying relations ("which I insisted on maintaining in order to delay the crumbling of the human world, measure, quantity and direction"). With the loss of the power to name, "they no longer had their teeth into things. *In the way* [*De trop*], the chestnut tree there... *In the way*, the Velleda.... And I... I too, was in *In the way*. [*Et moi... moi aussi j'étais de trop.*]" (p. 173). Nothing has necessity or "causal being." Everything becomes superfluous. And thus everything becomes nothing, infinitely deferred or open-ended and infinitely free:

The essential thing is contingency. I mean that one cannot define existence as necessity. To exist is simply *to be there* [*Je veux dire que, par définition l'existence n'est pas la nécessité. Exister, c'est être là.*]... contingency is not a delusion, a probability which can be dissipated; it is the absolute, consequently, the perfect free gift, [*c'est l'absolu, par conséquent la gratuité parfaite.*] All is free, this park this city and myself. When you realize that, it turns your heart upside down and everything begins to float.... (p. 176)

It is of crucial importance to observe that Roquentin's ontological crisis is paralleled—indeed is precipitated and defined—by his gradual discovery of the ultimate significance of the archetypal bourgeois city, modern man's at-home, as it were. What characterizes its weighty middle class citizens, both individually and collectively (as the City) is precisely their sense of privilege: the self-satisfied and comfortable certainty of divine (and dramatic) justification. Again and again, with an increasing sense of their self-deception, Roquentin discovers the unjustifiable assumption of, or rather faith in, Necessity behind the rhetoric of well-made drama that expresses their values and life-style, from the clothing they wear, the language they speak, and the gestures they make to the view of their *role* as citizens of the City, indeed, of the Cosmos. This calloused privileged belief in Necessity, in "their rights" (p. 170), for example, is there in the "authority and immense erudition" of "the papers crushed in the

hand" of the statue of the frock-coated school inspector, Gustave Impétraz standing in front of the municipal library (pp. 42, 106); it is in the "hat-raising" ritual of the Sunday morning "crowd" strolling along the "blessed" Rue Tournebridge; it is in Doctor Rogé's faith in "experience," and the "direct look [regard direct] which puts everything in place" (p. 92)—i. e., the gaze—that this experience justifies; and it is in the long row of portraits in the municipality museum (which Roquentin visits after the "invasion" has subsided), the portraits of the solidly rational—and totalitarian—merchants who made Bouville the solid, prosperous, and stable City it is:

The men had built Sainte-Cecile-de-la-Mer. In 1882, they founded the Federation of Shipowners and Merchants of Bouville "to group in one powerful entity all men of good will, to cooperate in national recovery and to hold in check the parties of disorder. . . ." They made Bouville the best equipped port in France for unloading coal and wood. . . . Stopping at no sacrifice to assist the improvement of the best elements in the working class, they created, on their own initiative, various centers for technical and professional study which prospered under their lofty protection. They broke the famous shipping strike in 1898 and gave their sons to their country in 1914. (p. 114)

This Necessity is, above all, in the piercing eyes of the portraits, which judge Roquentin's "useless" waywardness, his disorderly life, his eccentric existence, as it were, from the high vantage point of their "right to exist":

But [Pacôme] did not let go of me [Roquentin writes with savage irony]. I read a calm and implacable judgment in his eyes. . . .

His judgment went through me like a sword and questioned my very right to exist. And it was true, I had always realized it; I hadn't the right to exist. I had appeared by chance. . . .

But for this handsome, faultless man, now dead, for Jean Pacôme, son of the Pacôme of the Défense Nationale, it had been an entirely different matter: the beating of his heart and the mute rumblings of his organs, in his case, assumed the form of rights to be instantly obeyed. For sixty years, without a halt, he had used his right to live. The slightest doubt had never crossed those magnificent grey eyes. Pacôme had never made a mistake. (pp. 115-116)

It is precisely Roquentin's culminating discovery of the fraudulence of the Bouvillois' assumption of necessity—the identity of things—that, by contrast, precipitates in the park his understanding of the absurdity—the difference—of existence. And this discovery crystallizes his contempt for their privileged positivistic orientation, the logocentric perspective which, like that of the scientist or detective, assumes in advance that all objects, including human beings, have a predictable place and role to play in the dramatic scheme of things and thus justifies "naming": the establishment of public patterns of relationship by coercive inference from fragmentary and discontinuous evidence (clues). "...here is *Nausea*," Roquentin writes in his diary as he tries futilely to articulate the meaning of his experience in the park, "here there is what those bastards—the ones on the Coteau Vert and others—try to hide from themselves with their idea of their rights. But what a poor lie; no one had any rights; they are entirely free, like other men, they cannot succeed in not feeling superfluous [de trop]. And in themselves, secretly, they are *superfluous*: that is to say, amorphous, vague, and sad" (p. 177). To return to Heidegger's metaphor again, the Sunday strollers on the Coteau Vert, Dr. Rogé, Impétraz, Pacôme, and all the other "leaders" (chefs)²⁰ who overlook the Salon Bordurin-Renaudas are (in Sartre's existential reading of *Being and Time*) examples of the inauthentic, i. e. the unredeemably "fallen" *das Man* (the self-less One or They) whose totalitarian domestication of the world in fact constitutes a flight from the dread of nothingness. Falling as fleeing, writes Heidegger in anticipation of Sartre, "does not flee *in the face of* entities within-the-world; these are precisely what it flees towards—as entities alongside which our concern, lost in the 'they,' can dwell in tranquillized familiarity. When in falling we flee *into* the 'at-home' of publicness, we flee *in the face of* the 'not-at-home'; that is, we flee in the face of the uncanniness [*die Unheimlichkeit*] which lies in Dasein—in Dasein as thrown Being-in-the-World."²¹

²⁰ In French, the word *chef*, as in Sartre's short story "*L'Enfance d'un chef*," has the connotations of the fascist boss.

²¹ *Being and Time*, Sect. 40, p. 234. Heidegger's analysis of fallenness (*Verfallenheit*) is not, as it is for Sartre, intended primarily to define and judge a moral state. Fallenness, for Heidegger, is a characteristic of all Dasein, one that constitutes an essential access to ontological disclosure. As such, the purpose of Heidegger's account is to articulate a phenomenological hermeneutics of understanding and beyond that, of being. Nevertheless, Heidegger's analysis does discover deeper meanings in contexts, such as that which Sartre is depicting, in which the state of fallenness has become *habitual*.

Thus near the "end" of the novel, after Roquentin has discovered existence as the absence of presence and become free of necessity the ambiguous moral significance of which he expresses when he writes, "there is absolutely no reason for living" (p. 219), Sartre extends the open horizon of naming from the Garden metaphor to include its post-lapsarian analogy, the City. Standing at the summit of a hill overlooking Bouville—a context evoking the "Prospect Poem," i.e. the enlightenment's version of the medieval dream vision, in which the dreamer views existence from God's eye²²—the anti-Adam once again experiences the "vision" of unnamings, the always threatening existence encroaching on the precincts of an anthropocentric order or, as Roquentin puts it, on "all its geometries" (p. 14).²³ In imagery that evokes ironic echoes not only of the cities of Bacon and More, but also of Plethon, of Dante, of Augustine, of Virgil, and of the *polis* of the Greeks, indeed, of the Western—the ontotheological—tradition at large, he sees Bouville suddenly threatened by the invasion of existence. It is here that the name Bouville achieves its supreme irony. Unlike the protagonist of the prospect poem, who *sees* from his lofty distance the permanent order (*stasis*) informing the apparent disorder of immediacy, of the things themselves (process), Roquentin, in Sartre's destruction of this paradigmatic literary form of the ontotheological tradition, discovers the Nothingness that the "City" objectifies, i. e. covers over and forgets. The solid citizens "think it is *their* city, a good, solid, bourgeois city" [*ils pensent que c'est leur ville, une "belle cité bourgeoise"*]. They have no fears; "they feel *at home* [my emphasis] in it [*ils se sentent chez eux*], because "they have proof, a hundred times a day, that everything happens mechanically, that the world obeys fixed unchangeable laws," that—and here the metaphor of circularity should not be overlooked—"cities have only one day at their disposal and every morning it comes back exactly the same" (pp. 211-212). But

all this time, great, vague nature has slipped into their city, it has infiltrated everywhere, in their house, in their office, in themselves. It doesn't move, it stays quietly... and they don't see it, they imagine it to be outside, twenty miles from the city. I see it,

²² See Aldo Bernardo, "Dante's *Divine Comedy*: The View from God's Eye," *A Dante Symposium*, ed. W. DeSica and G. Rizzo (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965).

²³ Later, Roquentin writes, "I'll lean against a wall and when they go by I'll shout. 'What's the matter with your science. What have you done with your humanism? ...'" (p. 213).

I see this nature . . . I know that its obedience is idleness, I know it has no laws: what they take for constancy is only habit and it can change tomorrow.

What if something were to happen? What if something suddenly started throbbing? Then they would notice it was there and they'd think their hearts were going to burst. Then what good would their dykes, bulwarks, power houses, furnaces and pile drivers be to them? It can happen anytime, perhaps right now . . . (p. 212)

In this culminating passage which brings the "symbol" of the Western City into the orbit of the Garden "symbol," Sartre, it is important to note, focuses on a crucial difference in the parallelism; whereas the vision in the park demystifies Roquentin's logocentric language, the vision from the summit of the hill demystifies the Bouvillois' logocentric city. Sartre's focus, that is, points to a relationship, however tenuous, between Roquentin and the Bouvillois.

In this culminating passage, it is also worth observing, Sartre overtly establishes the defining thematic/formal motif of decentered contemporary fiction, indeed, of postmodern literature: what I have referred to as the ontological invasion of structure. It has fictional antecedents, of course, in Dickens (*Bleak House*), Dostoevsky (*Crime and Punishment*), Rilke (*The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*); Kafka (*The Trial*); Conrad (*The Heart of Darkness*); Hemingway (*The Sun Also Rises*); Lawrence (*The Rainbow*), Celine (*Voyage au bout de la nuit*). It also has its philosophical antecedents in Heidegger's phenomenological account of dread (*Angst*) and the Uncanny (*Unheimlichkeit*) in *Being and Time* and, especially, in "What is Metaphysics?" when he writes:

In dread, as we say, "one feels something uncanny [*unheimlich*]." What is this "something" [*es*] and thus "one"? We are unable to say what gives "one" that uncanny feeling. "One" just feels it generally [*im Ganzen*]. All things, and we with them, sink into a sort of indifference. But not in the sense that everything simply disappears; rather, in the very act of drawing away from us everything turns towards us. This withdrawal of what-is-in-totality, which crowds round us *in* dread, this is what oppresses us. There is nothing [as there is in fear] to hold on to. The only thing that remains and overwhelms us whilst what-is slips away, is this "nothing."²⁴

"Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," tr. R. F. C. Hull and Alan

But it is Sartre in *La Nausée*, as I intend to suggest, who makes explicit the formal imperatives of the theme of ontological invasion and thus activates its de-creative or de-structive potential for Beckett, Ionesco, Pinter, Sarraute, Pynchon, Barth, and many other postmodern writers.

IV

The synchronous unfolding of Roquentin's ontological crisis and his cumulative discovery of the bad faith—the self-deceptive coercion of the logocentric “direct look that puts everything in place”—on which the modern bourgeois/capitalistic City builds itself is of critical importance in interpreting *La Nausée*. Guided by Simone de Beauvoir's assertion in her autobiography that Sartre was not interested in political matters at the time he was writing the novel²⁵ and/or by the expectation of formal unity in received notions of literary competence, most commentators have either failed to perceive the parallel or to respond to the power of the *temporal fictional process*. Whatever the reason, the failure has led to an overemphasis of the ontological *theme*—which amounts to an implicit assumption that the ontology and the “politics” are virtually different categories. Thus, for example, Iris Murdoch concludes in a passage that characteristically blurs even the syntactical distinction between Sartre and Roquentin:

How does Sartre intend us to understand his myth? He is patently uninterested in the aesthetic solution. Nor, although Roquentin indulges in a certain amount of political analysis, does he seriously consider a political solution. He [sic] observes with disgust the ossified rigidity of bourgeois convention—but the pure radiant life with which the little melody is endowed never appears to him capable of assuming the form of a political end. The anti-rationalist, anti-essentialist teachings of the book, though they sometimes provide negative arguments against capitalism, or, more generally, institutionalism and bureaucracy, never take on a more positive ideological character (p. 13).

It is true, of course, that the emphasis of the fictional process of Sartre's novel is on Roquentin's ontological crisis. If, however, the

Crick, *Existence and Being*, with Introduction and Analysis by Werner Brock (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1949), p. 336.

²⁵ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life*, tr. Peter Green (New York: Lancer Books, 1966), p. 131.

parallel between his "visions" in the garden and on the hill overlooking the "solid, bourgeois city" is acknowledged, we realize that the personal ontological theme is not, as Murdoch and others imply, antithetical and separate from the "political" theme, but rather, that they are different manifestations of the same thing, that, in Heidegger's term, the latter is the "ontic" extension of the former. More specifically, we realize that Roquentin's discovery of the ultimate inauthenticity of "naming," i.e., of justifying existence from *the end*, is also a political discovery of the fraudulence of the ontotheological *polis*, the modern allotrope of which is the capitalistic City, which the privileged logocentric consciousness creates by self-righteously coercing existence into a stable, well-made-totalitarian-structure. Our awareness of Roquentin's discovery of the ontological/political continuum, in turn, establishes the grounds for understanding Sartre's ultimate attitude towards his protagonist's "aesthetic solution," which Murdoch quite rightly, if for the wrong reasons, feels uneasy about taking seriously. The political theme, in short, is not articulated explicitly; it is enacted by the formal process of *La Nausée*.

What happens to Roquentin on the ontological level is reflected analogously in the changes wrought on his imagination and on his literary ambitions by his "revelatory" experience in the park-garden. He discovers, that is, that the form of a work of literature mirrors the author's understanding of being, thus adding the category of literary art to the categories of language (naming) and the human City as a third member of the emergent analogy of un-naming. Despite Sartre's unequivocal assertion that "a fictional technique always relates back to the novelist's metaphysics," this category constitutes the most *overlooked* and, ironically, the most important, dimension of *La Nausée*—at least from the hermeneutic vantage point of the postmodern context—if, that is, our concern is with *La Nausée* as a kind of fiction.²⁶

²⁶ To her credit, Edith Kern makes Sartre's assertion the point of departure of her interpretation of *La Nausée*. But she takes the phrase, "a fictional technique," too literally, thus failing to perceive that Sartre, on the analogy with metaphysics, is referring essentially to fictional process (form). Though her insights into aspects of Sartre's art are often illuminating, in thus focussing her discussion on Sartre's fictional techniques rather than the "form" of the novel, she over-looks his destruction of the triple analogy between logocentric (spatial) words/city/literary art, and thus precludes the possibility of perceiving explicitly the crucial distinction between Modernist and post-Modernist fictional forms that Sartre is laboring to bring forth in *La Nausée*.

Having borne witness to the absurdity, the superfluity, the de-centeredness, of existence, Roquentin finds himself confronting a present devoid of a significant past and future, a present, that is, characterized by the absence of presence. Unlike the scientist—or the investigator in the classical detective story—he no longer has any justification for perceiving *meta-ta-physika* (from after or beyond or above things-as-they-are), for seeing events (time) spatially, i. e. as moving towards some preestablished end (*telos*) that gives human beings in a particular present the necessary “right to exist” that is, a significant history. Returning to the metaphor of naming, we might say that Roquentin can no longer encounter the world as a *liber naturae*: a logocentric text to be read from the end. Thus to imitate life in historiography or fiction re-collectively within the framework of an “Aristotelian” beginning, middle, and end, as Roquentin has tried to do with the Marquis de Rollebon, is to be guilty of precisely the kind of bad faith that gives the Bouville merchants, *les Salauds*, the complacent and self-satisfied sense of playing purposeful roles in a pre-ordained, a “well-made,” positivistic universe.

It is no accident, for example, that his detective-like efforts to find causal connections between the bewildering contradictions of Rollebon's life terminate in his discovery of the anthropomorphic will to power over existence that lies behind “causality”:

In the first place, starting from 1801, I understand nothing more about his conduct. It is not the lack of documents: letters, fragments of memoirs, secret reports, police records. On the contrary I have almost too many of them. What is lacking in all this testimony is firmness and consistency. [Ce qui manque dans tous ces témoignages, c'est la fermeté, la consistance].²⁷ They do not contradict each other, neither do they agree with each other; they do not seem to be about the same person.

. . . I am beginning to believe that nothing can ever be proved. These are honest hypotheses which take the facts into account: but I sense so definitely that they came from me, and that they are simply a way of unifying my own knowledge. Not a glimmer comes from Rollebon's side. Slow, lazy, sulky, the facts adapt themselves to the rigour of the order I wish to give them; but it remains outside of them. I have the feeling of doing a work of

²⁷ Though Lloyd Alexander correctly translates “fermeté” as “firmness,” it loses in translation the crucial connotations of “closure.”

pure imagination. [J'ai l'impression de faire un travail de pure imagination.] (pp. 22-23)

But the basis of the fully articulated analogy is established early in the process of Roquentin's "education" into the realities of existence when, under the influence of the Nausea, he begins to worry the distinction between *l'aventure* and *la vie*. And though he never completely and consciously accepts the distinction, it nevertheless helps precipitate the un-naming in the garden.

When "one tells about life" (*on raconte la vie*), Roquentin observes, he is in fact transforming life into adventure, the superfluous into a logocentric, a predictable and thus reassuring, well-made world, in which all the parts are integral and rigorously justified. That is, they fit like pieces in a picture puzzle or, as writers influenced by *La Nausée* such as Ionesco, Beckett, Robbe-Grillet, and Sarraute would imply later in their works, like clues in a detective story.²⁸ In other words, to "tell about life" is, like the Self-Taught man's humanistic educational project, to reify life. Or more accurately, it is to perceive the contingency of existence *spatially* rather than temporally and to *re-count* process from the distancing—and safe—vantage point of the end in what Roland Barthes, no doubt thinking of Sartre's distinction, has called the "preterite mode."²⁹ The

"As I have suggested in my article, "The Detective and the Boundary: Some Notes on the Postmodern Literary Imagination," *boundary* 2, 1 (Fall 1972), 147-168; reprinted in revised form in William V. Spanos, ed. *Existentialism 2: A Casebook* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976), pp. 163-189, the anti-detective story, which refuses to fulfill the causal expectations of a positivistic audience, is one of the essential forms of the postmodern fictional imagination. It is interesting to observe that it was Sartre in his essays on Nathalie Sarraute who first equated the new "anti-novel" with anti-detective fiction: Sarraute's *Portrait of a Man Unknown*, Sartre writes, "is an anti-novel that reads like a detective story. In fact it is a parody on the novel of 'quest' into which the author has introduced a sort of impassioned amateur detective... who... doesn't find anything, or hardly anything, and he gives up his investigation as a result of a metamorphosis; just as though Agatha Christie's detective on the verge of unmasking the villain, had himself suddenly turned criminal." ("Nathalie Sarraute," *Situations*, tr. Benita Eisler [New York: Braziller, 1965], pp. 195-96).

"Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, tr. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967), p. 36. "It [traditional narrative in the preterite mode] presupposes a world which is constructed, elaborated, self-sufficient, reduced to significant lines, and not one which has been sent sprawling before us, for us to take or leave. Behind the preterite there always

quantitative etymology, which Roquentin stresses by underscoring "*raconter*," it is important to note, reminds us not only of Bergson's critique of the positivists' spatialization of duration, but also of Kierkegaard's and Heidegger's critique of Platonic and Hegelian Recollection—and, by extension, that mode of poetry of the Romantic tradition which is defined in Wordsworth's phrase as "emotion recollected in tranquillity" and reaches its fullest expression in the Modernist text par excellence, Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*.³⁰

things happen one way and we tell about them in opposite sense [les événements se produisent dans un sens et nous les racontons en sens inverse]. You *seem* to start at the beginning: "It was a fine autumn evening in 1922. I was a notary's clerk in Marommes." *And in reality you have started at the end.* [Et en réalité c'est par la fin qu'on a commence.] It was there, *invisible and present, it is the one which gives to words the pomp and value of a beginning.* "I was out walking, I had left the town without realizing it, I was thinking about my money troubles." The sentence, taken simply for what it is, means that the man was absorbed, morose, a hundred leagues from an adventure, exactly in the mood to let things happen without noticing them. *But the end is there, transforming everything.* For us, the man is already the hero of the story. His moroseness, his money troubles are much more precious than ours, they are all gilded by the light of future passions. And the story goes on in the reverse: instants have stopped piling themselves in a light-hearted way one on top of the other, they are snapped up by the end of the story which draws them and each one of them, in turn, draws out the preceding instant: "It was night, the street was deserted." *The phrase is cast out neg-*

lurks a demiurge, a God or a reciter. The world is not unexplained since it is told like a story; each one of its accidents is but a circumstance, and the preterite is precisely this operative sign whereby the narrator reduces the exploded reality to a slim and pure logos, without density, without volume, without spread, and whose sole function is to unite as rapidly as possible a cause and an end.... So that finally the preterite is the expression of an order, and consequently of an euphoria. Thanks to it, reality is neither mysterious nor absurd; it is clear, almost familiar, repeatedly gathered up and contained in the hand of a creator.... pp. 30-31. See also Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play," quoted above in footnote 9.

³⁰ See my essay, "Heidegger, Kierkegaard and the Hermeneutic Circle: Towards a Postmodern Theory of Interpretation as Dis-closure," *Martin Heidegger and Literature*, ed. by William V. Spanos, *boundary 2*, 4 (Winter 1976), 455-488.

lightly, it seems superfluous; but we do not let ourselves be caught and we put it aside: this is a piece of information whose value we shall subsequently appreciate. And we feel that the hero has lived all the details of the night like annunciations, promises, or even that he lived only those that were promises, blind and deaf to all that did not herald adventure. We forget that the future was not yet there; the man was walking in a night without forethought, a night which offered him a choice of dull rich prizes, and he did not make his choice. (p. 57, my emphasis)

True to the inexorable demands of the analogy between a logocentric ontology and the well-made literary form (his destruction of the providential rhetoric of the ontotheological tradition—the rhetoric that grounds "telling-about" in the *Word*—should not be missed), Roquentin comes eventually to realize not only the spatial, but also the temporal dimension of contingency: that the historical past is an in-closing fiction, that only the "superfluous" present exists. Or rather, he comes to see that primordial existence is characterized by difference, that it is in a profound way radically temporal, i. e. open ended:

I looked anxiously around me; the present, nothing but the present... The true nature of the present revealed itself [*dévoilà*]: it is what exists, and all that was not present, did not exist. Not at all. Not in things, not even in my thoughts. (p. 130)

Thus along with his belief in the validity of naming and of at-homing existence as the City, he abandons, at least for the time being, whatever faith he had in the past (and future) as a valid guide to the present, i. e. as a way of grounding a "temporal" structure which could enclose the present in either a linear or dialectical order. In short, he abandons his faith in the validity of naming time. Thus also he gives up his *investigation* for a final cause that would "explain" or "justify" Rollebon's life, or, put in another way, for an appropriate solution to the "riddle" of his protagonist's existence that would draw its dispersed parts into a distancing conclusion, into a bounded picture as it were.

At the beginning of his reflections on the difference between life and adventure, Roquentin had thrown off vaguely (though the sentence was to assume scriptural authority for the postmodern literary imagination): "Beware of literature" (p. 19). After his visit to the Bouville museum, where the portraits of the bourgeois saints are enshrined and where he rejects the past, the "experience," that

justifies the bourgeois version of the world, he writes in his journals, "I could shape his [Rollebon's] features at will. . . . Only it was nothing more than an image in me, a fiction," (p. 132) and a few sentences later, "the great Rollebon affair was over, like a great passion" (p. 133). It is important to observe that what Roquentin rejects here under the pressure of primordial temporality is a "shape," an "image of existence," i. e. a spatial form.

V

It is at this point, after, that is, Roquentin has experienced (and understood) the de-centering, the unnamings, in all three of its manifestations—ontological, social, and literary—that the question of Sartre's relationship to his protagonist becomes a crucial one. As I have already suggested, most interpreters simply take for granted that Roquentin is a strictly autobiographical portrait of the early Sartre and, therefore, that he is little more than a mouthpiece for the author's philosophy at the time of writing *La Nausée*. What I want to suggest is that, however at one with his protagonist in the destructive phase, Sartre, in fact, dissociates himself from his "constructive" efforts that, more specifically, the "form" of Sartre's novel constitutes a de-struction, an ironic revelation of at least the ambiguity, if not the bad faith, of Roquentin's aesthetic resolution of his ontological crisis.

Despite Roquentin's "vision," he cannot completely acknowledge the unnamed world he has borne witness to in the garden—nor accept the "burden of freedom" (as Sartre, borrowing from Dostoevsky and Heidegger, was to put it later) that he understands to be the essential condition of the anti-Adam in the de-centered world. As we have seen, he despises the bourgeois merchants of Bouville for trying to "arrest" the movement of this superfluous temporal realm by imposing fraudulent names—a providential rhetoric—upon it. He is especially contemptuous of their arrogant devotion, on the grounds of divine justification, to technological process, which is, he knows, a self-deceptive effort to build dikes against the primordial slime (Bouville) or, to use Heidegger's metaphor again, to chart and domesticate *die unheimliche Welt*, the uncanny not-at-home. But Roquentin, too, finds this same existence not only dreadful but obscenely repellent, indeed, too terrible to be endured. As entry after entry throughout his journals suggest, his disgust for the things of the external world, including human beings is (and has been)

virtually total. There is very little in the realms of concrete existence, of "the things themselves," capable of arousing joy or even sympathy in him. Indeed, his disgust—and the rhetoric which embodies it—is remarkably and significantly reminiscent of the ascetic *contemptus mundi* that a segment of the medieval world practiced to raise their souls above the loathsome corruption of the earth—except, perhaps, that it borders more closely on the pathological:

Smiles. His teeth are rotten. The red hand does not belong to him, it is his neighbor's, a fellow with a black moustache. This fellow with the moustache has enormous nostrils that would pump air for a whole family and that eat up half his face, but in spite of that, he breathes through his mouth, gasping a little. With them is also a young man with a face like a dog. (p. 32)

Thus Roquentin will work out a mode of evasion that is more subtle—so much more that most critics have failed or refused to understand it as an evasion—but hardly more honest than that of the Bouville merchants. To anticipate, he will become, as his remarkably similar English-speaking counterpart, Stephen Dedalus, puts it (I will return to this relationship and the analogous rhetoric that expresses it), a soaring "priest of eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life."³¹

From the beginning, Roquentin notices that the Nausea subsides, or more precisely, that he *transcends* the nausea-provoking situation whenever he hears a certain American ragtime jazz tune. The first significant, if only tentative, intimation of the song's "mysterious" power to subdue the Nausea occurs early in the novel. Sitting in his favorite "well-lighted place," the *Rendezvous des Cheminots*, Roquentin is suddenly seized by the Nausea, the "new thing." As the bartender's purple suspenders begin to disintegrate before his eyes, he pleads, somewhat like a penitent to an intercessor, with the waitress, Madeleine, to play the jazz tune, "Some of These Days," on the phonograph. Though he is not fully conscious of his feeling, Roquentin knows that the "inflexible order" or, synonymously, the "hardness" of the song is somehow a viable barrier against the invading viscosity of existence which brings on the Nausea. As the music progresses inexorably toward the vocal he anticipates, Roquentin's sense of the jazz tune, not as melody, but

³¹ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. by Chester G. Anderson (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), p. 221.

"only notes [that] ... an *inflexible order* gives birth to ... and destroys...without even giving them time to recuperate and exist for themselves" (my emphasis), begins to make him feel happy. And this happiness "spreads at the bottom of the viscous puddle [flaque visqueuse], at the bottom of *our time*—the time of purple suspenders and broken chair seats." Once he equates existence and what he calls "our time," that is, the "fallen," the finite existential, the occasional, time that disintegrates, that corrupts—that disperses and differentiates the One as it were—he takes, at least tentatively, the final step in the process of neutralizing the Nausea when he intuitively the equation between this song, this "band of steel" as he repeatedly calls it, and timelessness, i.e. eternity. The passage, which I take to be at the thematic and rhetorical "heart" of Sartre's novel, needs to be quoted at length:

There is another happiness: outside there is this band of steel, the narrow duration of the music which traverses our time through and through [qui traverse notre temps de part en part], rejecting it; tearing as it with its dry little points; there is another time.

"Monsieur Randu plays hearts . . . and you place the shackle."

The voice [of one of the card players in the cafe, i.e., of existence] dies away and disappears. Nothing bites on the ribbon of steel, neither the opening door, nor the breath of cold air flowing over my knees, nor the arrival of the veterinary surgeon and his little girl: the music transpierces these vague figures and passes through them....

A few seconds more and the negress will sing. *It seems inevitable, so strong is the necessity of this music*: nothing can interrupt it, nothing which comes from *this time in which the world has fallen*; it will stop of itself, as if by order. If I love this beautiful voice it is especially because of that: it is neither for its fullness nor its sadness, *rather because it is the event for which so many notes have been preparing*, from so far away, dying that it might be born....

The last chord has died away. In the brief silence which follows I feel strongly that there it is, that *something has happened*.

Silence.

*Some of these days
You'll miss me honey*

What has just happened is that the Nausea has disappeared. When the voice was heard [*s'est élevée*] in the silence, I felt my

body harden and the Nausea vanish. Suddenly: it was almost unbearable to become so hard, so brilliant [ainsi tout dur, tout rutilant]. At the same time the music was drawn out, dilated, swelled like a waterspout. It filled the room with its metallic transparency, crushing our miserable time against the walls. I am *in* the music. (pp. 33-35, my emphasis, except for that in the fifth and seventh paragraphs.)

In this moment of silence, "after the last chord has died away," it is Roquentin's perception of the whole song *simultaneously*, that is, as an anticipated necessity, which makes him "hard" and "dry" and "brilliant" as the steel-like music. The moment of silence, as his theological rhetoric here and elsewhere makes clear, is a transcendent moment, an *epiphany* as it were, that transports him into a timeless realm above this miserable and, as the reference to time as a cockroach suggests, verminous existence "in which the world has fallen." A little later, Roquentin, recalling this moment in which "something has happened," identifies it with "adventure":

Something is beginning in order to end: adventure does not let itself be drawn out; it only makes sense when dead. . . . Each instant appears only as part of a sequence. [Chaque instant ne paraît que pour amener ceux qui suivent.] (p. 54)

And he concludes again, "I am so happy when a negress sings: what summits [summits] would I not reach if *my own life* made the subject of the melody" (p. 55). In so doing he brings the jazz tune (a certain kind of art), adventure, and the rhetoric of religious transcendence (of going beyond or, rather, of rising above existence)—the very rhetoric, it is important to observe, that he destroys in his entries describing the un-naming in the park-garden—into relationship.

This equation is, in the early stages of Roquentin's education, uncertain and tentative, but he persistently reiterates it throughout the rest of the journals. And at the "end"—after he has undergone the "revelation" of the un-naming and the narrative has come "full circle"—it suddenly occurs to him, as he listens to the negress's song in the Rendezvous des Cheminots for the last time before leaving Bouville for Paris, that these intimations have been leading inexorably—necessarily—to one conclusion: that he write a novel which would be the equivalent of the jazz tune. The precise form of the novel Roquentin will write is never made explicit. It is obvious, however, that it will not be written in the linear or "preterite mode" of, say, Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet* (which, significantly, like the

biography of Rollebon he cannot finish writing, Roquentin cannot finish reading). For he has made it convincingly clear that the strategy of writing from a preconceived event-causing end has as its motive the impulse to reify anxiety (dread), which has no-thing or nothing for its object, in order to make contingency (freedom) "necessary" or, to use Heidegger's metaphor, to make Nothing *man-ageable*.³² He has made it clear, in other words, that the preterite mode of the "well made" novel, which re-counts in order to stay ontological invasion, is the inauthentic logocentric mode of the positivistic consciousness, the consciousness, more specifically, of the bourgeois *Salauds*. It is, I think, the persuasiveness of this inference that has led most commentators, both philosophers and literary critics for whom teleological form is ontologically prior to temporality in the hermeneutic process, to assume that the species of novel Roquentin intends to write is capable of achieving for its author an unequivocally authentic "salvation" from existence. But the temporal process of the "narrative" of *La Nausée* simply will not support this too easy identification. On the contrary, a temporal reading of Sartre's text suggests, rather, that Roquentin's decision to write such a novel constitutes an act of bad faith, which is equally as questionable as that which establishes the well-made universe of *les Salauds*. Having come face to face with the de-centered world, with the un-named existence which is prior to essence—whether the essence of the providential world of the Second Adam or the positivistic City of the Third Adam—he flees from the demands *this world* ("this time") makes on his humanity and his art, that is, from the imperatives of freedom, by seeking the well lighted (radiant) refuge of an ultimately similar, if more subtly conceived, form of essentialism or logocentric meta-physics than that of the solid citizens of Bouville. The nature of this metaphysics can be suggested by inferring the *form* of the novel Roquentin intends to write—it is *not* the journal form of *La Nausée*, as we shall see—from certain recurrent, though unexamined, images, to which I have already referred but held in abeyance, that inform the rhetoric expressing his developing understanding of why the jazz song has the power of neutralizing the Nausea.

Initially, as in the preceding passage, Roquentin associates his model, the benign jazz tune, with hard metallic images. Later, immediately after he has experienced the un-naming in the garden, where the

³² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Sect. 40, 228 ff.

destruction of his ontological frame of reference dis-covers existence to him, he associates the jazz tune with geometric images, especially with the circle, and pits these over against the obscene viscosity of existence. "If you existed," he writes in his journals, "you had to exist *all the way*, as far as mouldiness, bloatedness, obscenity were concerned. In another world, circles, bars of music, keep their pure and rigid lines. But existence is a deflection" (p. 172). And then, after equating existence with absurdity, he observes, "A circle is not absurd, it is clearly explained by the rotation of a straight segment around one of its extremities. *But neither does a circle exist.* This root, on the other hand, existed in such a way that I could not explain it. Knotty, inert, nameless, it fascinated me, filled my eyes, brought me back unceasingly to its own existence. In vain to repeat: 'This is a root'—it didn't work anymore [*ça ne prenait plus*] (p. 174, my emphasis).³³

Up until this point, as we see from the above passages, Roquentin invokes the other-worldliness of the song, the bar of steel, and the circle primarily to define by contrast the un-named world of contingent existence and to emphasize its "obscene" corruptions. But in the "end," after the intimations of immortality have coalesced, he tips the balance. As he is listening to the jazz tune for the last time, he realizes fully that, in being like a circle, the song provides him with a means of escaping existence, or in the crucial religious rhetoric which, like so many Modernists, he is prone to use, with a means of being "saved" (p. 236), of being "'washed' of the sin of existing [*du peche d'exister*]" (p. 232).

Sitting at his table Roquentin rehearses once again the ontological characteristics of the song: "It does not exist....[I]f I were to break it [the record] in two, I wouldn't reach *it*. It is beyond—always beyond something, a voice, a violin note. Through layers and layers of existence, it veils itself, thin and firm....It is behind [existants]: I don't even hear it, I hear sounds, vibrations in the air which unveil it. It does not exist because it has nothing superfluous: it is all the rest which in relation to it is superfluous. It *is*" (p. 233, Sartre's emphasis.). Suddenly he realizes, in something like an epiphany, that this is precisely what he too has been yearning for: "And I too wanted to *be*. That is all I wanted; this is the last word. [*Voilà le fin mot de ma vie.*] At the bottom of all these attempts

³³ See also p. 175: "Black? The root *was not* black....black, like the circle, did not exist."

which seemed without bonds, I find the same desire again: to drive existence out of me, to rid [vider] the passing moments of their fat, to twist them, dry them, purify myself, harden myself, to give back, at last the sharp, precise sound of a saxophone note" (p. 234, Sartre's emphasis.). In thus perceiving the absolute necessity of the art object, the Being of its being, he also perceives that through the novel, *justification* of his existence was possible. But Roquentin's hopeful question, "Can you justify your existence then?" inevitably recalls his contemptuous judgment against the Bouvillois' presumptuous necessity, their "right to exist," which, as he knows, is a way of escaping existence. Despite the antithetical ontological sources of the novel he envisions (Husserlian idealism), his too easily achieved belief in the justifying potential of a novel that *is*, that *substantiates* being, i.e. reduces it to "matter" as a final ground, thus signals the ultimate identity of his text and the logocentric prevarications—or better, fictions—that *les Salauds* call their lives.³⁴ This may, on the surface, sound like an outrageous coercion of Sartre's distinction between Roquentin and the Bouvillois into an identity, but when we remember the conclusion of "The Childhood of a Leader" (written simultaneously with *La Nausée*), the powerful novella about the making of the type of bourgeois fascist whose portraits adorn the municipal museum of Bouville, we begin to understand how valid it is:

³⁴ In this equation, Sartre is at one with Martin Heidegger's critique of the Western onto-theo-logical tradition, according to which both positivism and idealism, despite his preference for the latter, e. g. Kant, are at bottom metaphysical strategies in the sense of interpreting temporal reality spatially, i. e., *meta-ta-physika*, from beyond or above things-as-they-are. It is worth pointing out, in this respect, that it is no accident that Joseph Frank uses the term "spatial form" as a sympathetic definition of the modernity of Symbolist/Imagist poetics without indicating awareness of the fact that Henri Bergson (and T. E. Hulme) used the same term earlier to define and criticize the reality perceived by the positivistic consciousness, the reality, that is, deplored by the Symbolist/Imagist imagination. See Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," *Sewanee Review*, 53 (Spring, Summer, Autumn, 1945), 221-40, 433-45, 643-65 (reprinted in *The Widening Gyre: Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature* [New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1963], pp. 3-62); T. E. Hulme, "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds," *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1924), pp. 123-214; and Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, tr. F. L. Pogson (New York and London: Macmillan, 1910).

"I HAVE RIGHTS!" Rights! [Lucien thinks] Something like triangles and circles: it was so perfect that it didn't exist. You could trace thousands of circles with a compass in vain, you could never make a single circle. Generations of workers could even scrupulously obey the commands of Lucien; they would never exhaust his right to command; rights were beyond existence, like mathematical objects and religious dogma. And now Lucien was just that; an enormous bouquet of responsibilities and rights. He had believed that he had existed by chance for a long time, but it was due to a lack of sufficient thought. His place in the sun was marked in Férolles long before his birth. They were *waiting* for him long before his father's marriage: if he had come into the world it was to occupy that place: "I exist," he thought, "because I have the right to exist." And, perhaps for the first time, he had a flashing, glorious vision of his destiny (my emphasis).³⁵

The difference between Roquentin's and the Bouville merchants' notions of justification is that one is characterized by internal simultaneity and the other by external causal progress, transcendent timelessness as opposed to well-made linear temporality. Like Heidegger, Sartre, of course, perceives the latter to be the more immediate enemy. But he also perceives that behind the difference lies a spatializing or objectifying metaphysics, that, in other words, they both belong to the logocentric ontological tradition.

The first moment of transcendent illumination, we recall, is described at the beginning of the journal when Roquentin, prepared by the preceding suggestion of "the inflexible order," the "necessity of this music," experiences the *whole song at once* in the silence between the dying out of the last chord and the emergence of the negress's voice. And the final and definitive moment of illumination comes in the last entry of the journal, when Roquentin discovers in the moment of epiphanic "liberation" that just as the song "*is*," so

³⁵ Jean Paul Sartre, "The Childhood of a Leader," *Intimacy*, tr. Lloyd Alexander (New York: New Directions, 1948), p. 158. This story, the French title of which is "L'Enfance d'un chef," first appeared in the collection *Le Mur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1939). It had not been previously published. Lucien, it is worth observing to suggest the analogy with Roquentin, listens to the "voice of Sophie Tucker" on a gramophone record. As Eugenia Zimmerman has persuasively shown in "'Some of These Days': Sartre's *Petite Phrase*," *Contemporary Literature*, 11 (Summer 1970), 375-381, Sartre in *La Nausée*, is alluding to Sophie Tucker's recording of "Some of These Days," mistaking her for a black.

too, he wants to "be," a substantial essence, free from the ravages of historical time. Like all metaphysicians from Plato through Descartes, Kant,³⁶ and Hegel, Roquentin is compelled by a nostalgia for lost origins. He wants, that is, like them, to perceive existence spatially, to annihilate the temporality which, as Heidegger insists in *Sein und Zeit*, defines human being (Dasein)—and its counterpart, the difference or change (the motion of becoming) that generates desire and loathing—to become something like an angel, capable, that is, of the immediate and undifferentiated knowledge, the "allatonceness," of pure intelligence.³⁷ This explains Roquentin's contradictory yearning for the "higher" world beyond, which pervades his journals. It also explains his idealization of evanescence, of weightlessness which, in contrast to the weighty solidity of the middle class, Sartre, under the influence of Kierkegaard's critique of the "hovering"—the infinitely negative—ironic or aesthetic consciousness, will henceforth use in his fiction and drama to characterize the hellish "freedom towards nothing" of the disengaged man, i. e., the aesthete: Erostratus, Orestes, Matthieu Delarue and others.³⁸ The form of the novel Roquentin envisages is thus clearer in his mind than he in fact claims. It will of course, be "modern." But it will be modern, not in opposition to the fiction of the 1930's, but to the positivistic well-made fiction of the bourgeois nineteenth century, in which the assured detective/psychologist (whether protagonist or reader) reigns supreme. Roquentin, that is, will not employ the melodramatic linear sense of "adventure" to work out a "realistic" form that mirrors a positivistic metaphysics and ethos. He will not, for example, model his fiction on Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet*. He will begin, rather, with the privileged, i. e. teleological, moment, the concept of "adventure" as transcendental aesthetic epiphany, and seek to achieve something like geometric or, at any rate, pure form, in which "the passing moments are rid of their fat" by being coerced into a spatial mould.

³⁶ Heidegger qualifies Kant's spatializing impulse in his "dialogue" with *The Critique in Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, tr. James S. Churchill, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), where he says that his predecessor wanted to articulate a temporal interpretation of Being but was inhibited by the metaphysical rhetoric of the tradition.

³⁷ The term, of course, is H. Marshall McLuhan's. See *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967), p. 63.

³⁸ The phrase is from *The Age of Reason*, the first book of Sartre's unfinished tetralogy, *Les Chemins de la liberté*.

Ultimately, of course, the novel he intends to write will align itself with the idealistic aesthetics implied by Socrates to his uncomprehending (because earthbound) listener Protarchus in Plato's dialogue on Pleasure, the *Philebus*:

The beauty of figures which I am now trying to indicate [which give the truest and highest pleasure] is not what most people would understand as such, not the beauty of a living creation in a picture; what I mean, what the argument points to, is something straight, or round, and the surfaces and solids which a lathe, or a carpenter's rule and square, produces from the straight and the round. I wonder if you understand. Things like that, I maintain, are beautiful not, like things in a relative sense; they are always beautiful in their very nature, and they carry pleasures peculiar to themselves which are quite unlike the pleasure of scratching.³⁹

More immediately, however, it will align itself with that literary tradition which has become increasingly disillusioned in the possibility of achieving dialogue with the terrible earth and, therefore, has abandoned it in the futile solipsistic pursuit of a compensatory timeless eternity of one sort or another. I am referring, of course, to the "Modernism"—that is no longer very modern by the time Sartre is writing *La Nausée*—which, in reaction against scientific positivism and its literary counterpart (the "realistic" or well-made work), emerged out of the "natural supernaturalism"⁴⁰ of the Romantic movement in the consolatory aestheticism of *fin de siècle* literature and culminated in the ego-centric "religion" of "infinite negativity" of the Symbolist/Imagist movement—in Mallarmé, Verlaine, Proust, T. E. Hulme, W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, et. al.—which Sartre however simplistically, was to inveigh against in

³⁹ Plato, *Philebus*. Like Roquentin, Socrates goes on virtually to identify the pleasure derived from geometrical forms with "that of audible sounds which are smooth and clear, and deliver a single series of pure notes, are beautiful not relatively to something else, but in themselves, and they are attended by pleasures implicit in themselves" (51c). That Sartre knew Plato's *Philebus* is evident from the fact that he gives Orestes (another "hoverer") in *Les Mouches* the alias "Philebus." See Robert Champigny, *Stages on Sartre's Way* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), p. 86.

⁴⁰ The phrase, of course, is derived from M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971).

*What is Literature?*⁴¹ Roquentin's novel, in other words, will have its origins in the neo-Platonic Modernism or, as Jacques Maritain calls its extreme form, the "angelic imagination," which tries on the analogy of the pure intelligence of divine perception "to disintegrate or to circumvent the image in the illusory pursuit of essence" and "professes to know nature as essence at the same time that it has become alienated from nature in the rejection of its material forms."⁴² (In interpreting Modernism in terms of what Kierkegaard calls interchangeably irony or "infinite negativity," I am, of course, denying the freedom of the "free play" attributed to the writing of several of its central figures—Mallarmé, Proust, and Valéry, for example—by Jacques Derrida and the deconstructive critics he has influenced.) There is ultimately no other way of understanding the natural supernatural rhetoric of Roquentin's last entry:

... They [the Jewish songwriter and the black singer] *have washed themselves of the sin of existence*. . . . I feel something

⁴¹ This definition of Modernism is an oversimplification, of course, but it does express a governing impulse of this literature and especially the criticism it has given rise to. For an amplified version of this definition, see my essay "Modern Literary Criticism and The Spatialization of Time: An Existential Critique," *JAAC*, 29 (Fall 1970), 87-104. See also Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964); and Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," *Sewanee Review*, 53 (Spring, Summer, Autumn, 1945): 221-40, 433-45, 643-65. This impulse has been nicely epitomized recently in M. H. Abrams in *Natural Supernaturalism*: "Such features [the "circular shape"] of Wordsworth's *Prelude* brings to mind the subject matter, aim, and structural experiments in the chief enterprise of some of our best modern writers. This is the 'creative autobiography'—the more-or-less fictional work of art about the development of the artist himself, which is preoccupied with memory, time, and the relations of what is passing to what is eternal; is punctuated by illuminated moments, or 'epiphanies'; turns on a crisis which involves the question of the meaning of the author's life and the purpose of his sufferings; is resolved by the author's discovery of his literary identity and vocation and the attendant need to give up worldly involvement for artistic detachment; and includes its own poetic, and sometimes the circumstances of its own genesis" (p. 80). It is clear that Edith Kern's analysis of *La Nausée* as a *Künstlerroman* places Sartre's novel in this Romantic/Modernist tradition.

⁴² See Jacques Maritain, *The Dream of Descartes*, tr. Mabelle L. Anderson (New York: Philosophical Library, 1944), pp. 179-86. The quotation is from Allen Tate, "The Symbolic Imagination," *The Forlorn Demon: Didactic and Critical Essays* (Chicago: Regnery, 1953), pp. 37-38. Like Ezra Pound before him, Tate fails to include temporality as an integral dimension of the image thus inhibiting a full understanding of the implications of his definition. It is, I submit, a momentous failure.

brush against me lightly. . . . Something I didn't know any more: a sort of joy.

The negress sings. Can you justify your existence then? . . .

Couldn't I try? . . . Naturally, it wouldn't be a question of a tune...but couldn't I, in another medium? ...It would have to be a book: I don't know how to do anything else. But not a history book: history talks about what has existed—an existant can never justify the existence of another existant. My error, I wanted to resuscitate the Marquis de Rollebon. Another type of book. I don't quite know which kind—but you would have to guess behind the printed words, behind the pages, *at something which would not exist, which would be above existence*. A story, for example, something that could never happen, *an adventure*. *It would have to be beautiful and hard as steel and make people ashamed of their existence* (p. 237, my emphasis).

It is thus that Roquentin, like his Modernist fathers, will become the privileged maker (author) of a mystified text, and, in so doing, a perpetuator of the logocentric ontotheological tradition.

It could be argued, as Frank Kermode does in *The Sense of an Ending* that, as novelist, Sartre is here acknowledging the ultimate authorial necessity to impose fictions or concordances on contingency, and, indeed, this is consistent with his thesis that man chooses himself.⁴³ But as both the content (the emphasis on "the freedom" Roquentin discovers after the reduction by violence in the garden) and, as we shall see, the "dis-closive," if not precisely "open," form of *La Nausée* itself makes clear, Sartre as phenomenologist ultimately insists against Sartre as metaphysician on respect for—perhaps even a generosity towards—the contingent and analogously, therefore, an artfulness, if not an artlessness, that valorizes such respect.⁴⁴ And Roquentin's final entry about the novel he intends to write contains nothing of this. His reference to justifying his existence through art should recall ironically his contemptuous attitude towards the Bouvillois' presumptuous and evasive necessity, their privileged "right

⁴³ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 133ff. See also Kermode, *Continuities* (London: Routledge Kegan & Paul, 1968), pp. 180-186.

⁴⁴ I am referring, of course, to the Heideggerian rejection of the meta-physical/aesthetic "will to power" over existence in favor of *Gelassenheit*, letting be or, better, letting being be. See Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, tr. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966).

to exist" and the rhetoric of literary realism that expresses it. And if it doesn't, surely Roquentin's familiar Modernist Will to Power over existence, his disdain, that is, for the ugliness, the squalor, of temporality and his proud Gnostic impulse to "rise" into that "other world" "above existence" by way of spatializing, of coercively in-closing, the temporality of language (which, as discourse, according to Heidegger, is equiprimordial with Dasein as Being-in-the-world),⁴⁵ reveals Sartre's ultimately ironic attitude towards his "hero" behind his perhaps ambiguous intention.

Indeed, the parallel between Roquentin's "Platonic" aesthetics and that of the Symbolist/Imagist movement is remarkable. This can be seen most explicitly by comparing it, both motive (*Kunstwollen*) and envisaged form, with that of Wilhelm Worringer, whose *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* (*Abstraction and Empathy*, 1908) not only epitomized the early Modernist impulse but was, by way of T. E. Hulme, a very influential agent in the shaping of the Symbolist/Imagist poetic. Reacting against the unshakeable optimism of post-Renaissance Western art in the face of cultural disintegration in the modern world, Worringer points out that the predominant form of art in human history has not been the empathetic time/motion art of Western humanism, which assumes "a happy pantheistic relationship of confidence between man and the phenomena of the external world,"⁴⁶ but, rather, the geometric or "spatial" art of *stasis*, the "religious" art of primitive cultures (especially African and Egyptian), Byzantium, and, more generally, the Orient,⁴⁷ that finds its urge in the need for the repose that an absolute source or origin provides in the face of "the immense dread of space":

Tormented by the entangled inter-relationship and flux of the phenomena of the outer world, such peoples were dominated by an immense need for tranquillity. The happiness they sought from art did not consist as it does in the Western humanistic tradition in the possibility of projecting themselves into the things of the outer world, of enjoying themselves in them, but in the possibility of taking the individual thing of the external world out of its arbitrary-

⁴⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Section 34, p. 203.

⁴⁶ Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, tr. Michael Bullock (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), p. 15.

⁴⁷ A qualification is necessary here, since one thinks immediately of Heidegger's own relating of *Gelassenheit* and of hermeneutics with Japanese Noh drama in his dialogue with a Japanese philosopher in *On The Way to Language*.

ness and seeming fortuitousness [i.e., contingency], of eternalising it by approximation to abstract forms and, in this manner, of finding a point of tranquillity and a refuge from appearances. Their most powerful urge was, so to speak, to wrest the object of the external world out of its natural context, out of the unending flux of being, to purify it of all its dependence upon life, i.e., of everything about it that was arbitrary, to render it necessary and irrefragable, to approximate to its *absolute* value. Where they were successful in this, they experienced that happiness and satisfaction which the beauty of organic-vital form affords us [i.e., the Western tradition]; indeed, they knew no other beauty. . . .⁴⁸

Reminded of his predisposition towards Platonic beauty—towards “surfaces and solids which a lathe, or a carpenter’s rule and square, produce from the straight and the round”—by this apotheosis of “necessary and irrefragable” forms “wrested from the unending flux of being” (which T. E. Hulme was to idealize in his famous metaphor of the architect’s curve⁴⁹) it becomes vividly clear to us that Roquentin is thus a late descendent of the first generation of Modernists. Like them, he too is in search of *illo tempore*, that Golden Age at the beginning when the many was One; difference, Identity, words, the Word. We perceive, for example, that he is the heir of Marcel Proust, whose being, which will become the novel, is able in the “celestial” moment “to seize, isolate, immobilize for the duration of a lightning flash what it never apprehends, namely, a fragment of time in its pure state” and thus to achieve “the only environment in which he could live and enjoy the essence of things, that is to say, entirely outside time;”⁵⁰ of

“Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy*, pp. 16-17. This art, of course, goes hand in hand with myths of the recollection of origins studied by Mircea Eliade in *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, tr. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), which, in their circularity, resemble Roquentin’s dream and Proust’s novel.

“T. E. Hulme, “Romanticism and Classicism,” *Speculations*. “You know what I call architect’s curves—flat pieces of wood with all different kinds of curvature . . . Suppose that instead of your curved pieces of wood you have a springy piece of steel. . . . Now the state of tension or concentration of mind, if [the poet] is doing anything really good in this struggle against the ingrained habit of the technique, may be represented by a man employing all of his fingers to bend the steel out of its own curve and into the exact curve which you want. *Something different to what it would assume naturally*,” pp. 132-33 (my emphasis).

“Marcel Proust, *The Past Recaptured in Remembrance of Things Past*,

W. B. Yeats, who prays in "Sailing to Byzantium" that the cycle close, thus liberating him from the dreadful limitations of understanding of temporal existence, making him a golden artifice of eternity from which distance he can see (know) all at once:

III

O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing-masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

IV

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.⁵¹

He is also the heir of Virginia Woolf, who arrests time—and sees into the permanent heart of things, the still point, as it were—in *To the Lighthouse*, by spatializing (end-ing) it as her surrogate, Lilly Briscoe, does in her geometric painting (her epiphany), which triumphs over the temporality that destroys Mrs. Ramsey and her world:

Quickly, as if she were recalled by something over there, she

Vol. II, tr. Frederick Blossom (New York: Modern Library, 1932), pp. 991-996. As Eugenia Zimmermann suggests in pointing to the parallel between the use to which Roquentin puts "Some of These Days" and the use to which Marcel puts the "Vinteuil Sonata," ("Some of These Days": Sartre's *Petite Phrase*, 3), the Modernist tradition, from Pater to Proust, often uses music as the model for literature. But it is to be noted that in this tradition, as in Plato (and Roquentin), music is seen plastically. The source again is Plato's *Philebus*, where Socrates equates geometric forms with pure, abstract musical sounds. See footnote 39.

⁵¹ See also "Byzantium," and "Phases of the Moon," where Yeats praises the "image" out of time in phase 28.

turned to her canvas. There it was—her picture. Yes, with all its greens and blues, its line running up and across, its attempt at something. . . . With a sudden intensity—as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision. (p. 310)⁵²

But it is primarily the parallel between Roquentin's vision of the novel he hopes to write and the aesthetics or rather the poetics of iconic *stasis*—of epiphany—of Joyce's Stephen Dedalus that reveals most clearly his kinship with the Symbolists and their Platonic, or, better, neo-Gnostic, logocentric metaphysics. Given the impact of the anti-Adamic experience of un-naming, the parallel also suggests Sartre's negative judgment against Roquentin's "aesthetic" resolution. For the parallel between Sartre's portrait of the historian "turned" novelist and Joyce's portrait of the artist as a young man is so close that it may well represent a parody or an incipient parody of Joyce's angelistic artist and a de-struction of what the French existential phenomenologist takes to be the received epiphanic structure of Joyce's text.

Like Roquentin, Stephen too undergoes a terrible un-naming or, more accurately, an un-homing process that begins, in the Christmas dinner scene, with the dis-integration of his "Ptolemaic" or logocentric macrocosm, in which he is the center of the universe, and culminates in his sense of metaphysical homelessness incumbent on the loss of faith in his priestly calling. And like Roquentin, Stephen, too, compensates for his shattered metaphysics and transcends the "squalor"—the "shame of existence"—by "becoming," like so many Modernists, "a priest of eternal imagination." Thus near

⁵²The final allusion to the culminating moment—the epiphany of Christ's great creative labor, which brings the gestating Judeo-Christian cosmic drama of presence to fruition (completion)—is not, of course, accidental. As in the case of most Modernist literature, the "natural supernatural" symbol is meant to define by compensatory contrast the revelation of presence (and its saving potential) of Symbolist art in a world in which God is dead, in a world, that is, which, having undergone un-naming, is no longer readable as a cosmic drama of presence. Compare Roquentin's aesthetics with Virginia Woolf's in her journal entry on *The Waves*: "The idea has come to me that what I want now to do is to saturate every atom. I mean to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to give the moment whole; whatever it includes." Quoted in Ralph Freedman, *The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Herman Hesse, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 192.

the end of *Portrait*, after Stephen has experienced his climactic "Icarian" epiphany—an adventure as privileged moment—the too pontifical would-be artist explains to his earthy Protarchan friend Lynch (who listens to Stephen only because the latter provides him with cigarettes) in the best exegetical style:

You see I use the word *arrest*. I mean the tragic emotion is static. Or rather the dramatic emotion is. The feelings excited by improper art are kinetic, desire and loathing. Desire urges us to possess, to go to something; loathing urges us to abandon, to go from something. These are kinetic emotions. The arts which excite them, pornographical or didactic, are therefore improper arts. The aesthetic emotion (I use the general term) is therefore static. The mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing.⁵³

Whatever Joyce's intentions, this passage about the privileged inclusive perspective of iconic poetics—with its clear reminiscences of Gautier, Baudelaire, Proust, Worringer, Hulme, Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Yeats, Eliot, Woolf, *et. al.*—has often been referred to as a remarkable account of what Joseph Frank has called the "spatial form" of early Modernist poetic and novelistic practice. It has also been invoked by Modernist literary theoreticians with something like scriptural authority as a justification for a logocentric hermeneutics and critical theory—a theory that militantly rejects the existential or "interested" nature of literary texts, in favor of the principle of autonomy: that "A poem should not mean/*but be*."⁵⁴ As this formulation suggests, it is also, more than all the other examples to which I have referred, similar to the poetic theory that Roquentin evolves from the jazz tune and points to fundamentally similar psychological motives: in Worringer's terms, "the urge to abstraction," which, unlike the "urge to empathy" (that "finds

⁵³ James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. by Chester B. Anderson (New York: Viking Press, 1968), p. 205.

⁵⁴ My emphasis. The Modernist poetics of autonomy informing Archibald MacLeish's formula from "Ars Poetica" derives, as Cleanth Brooks makes clear in *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), from I. A. Richards: "For him, a poem is not a more or less true statement... and it is in terms of what may be called its psychological structure—'The resolution, inter-animation, and balancing of impulses—that all the more valuable effects of poetry must be described.' He had expressed this more simply and emphatically elsewhere in the statement that 'it is never what a poem says that matters, but what it is'" (p. 48).

its gratification in the beauty of the organic") finds its satisfaction "in the life-denying inorganic, in the crystalline or, in general terms, in all abstract law and necessity."⁵⁵

Stephen's apotheosis or mystification (in the context of Lessing's *Laocöon* as well as St. Thomas's aesthetics, incidentally) of the static at the expense of the kinetic, which is so reminiscent of the obsession to "arrest" time/motion in Imagist/Symbolist poetry and poetic theory (T. E. Hulme's *Speculations* and Wyndham Lewis's *Time and Western Man* are especially important here) is precisely the equivalent of Roquentin's effort to annihilate time, to rid it of its fat (which is to say, to transcend existence). Both conceive the novel as a spatial or teleological rather than a temporal form, as a form that, like the jazz tune and the circle, can be seen at once, *meta-ta-physika*, in other words, as a form that simply *is*. Further, in Stephen's exegesis of the word *visa* in St. Thomas Aquinas's aesthetic doctrine, *Pulcra sunt quae visa placent* (that is beautiful the apprehension of which pleases), which he invokes to amplify his poetics of *stasis*, Joyce's "her," like Roquentin and so many of the early Modernists, perceives the transcendent static image in terms of the lifeless—and unadulterated—geometry of Platonic or Gnostic forms. "The word," he says to his rather reluctant listener, thus echoing Socrates' comment to Protarchus, "though it is vague, is clear enough to keep away good and evil which excite desire and loathing. It means certainly a stasis and not a kinesis. How about the true? It produces a stasis of the mind. You would not write your name in pencil across the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle" as his earthy and kinetically oriented friend Lynch had "improperly" done "on the backside of the Venus of Praxiteles."⁵⁶

But the parallelism is even more particular. For the culminating metaphor of rising heavenward, out of the "sordid squalor" of the

⁵⁵ Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy*, p. 4.

⁵⁶ Joyce, *Portrait*, p. 205. Socrates', Stephen's, and Roquentin's preference for the pure pleasure of aesthetic form as opposed to adulterated pleasures like scratching or sexual excitement is echoed by T. E. Hulme in *Speculations*: "There is nothing vital in Byzantine art; the emotion you get from it is not a pleasure in the reproduction of natural or human life. The disgust with the trivial and accidental characteristics of living shapes, the searching after an austerity, a perfection and rigidity which vital things can never have, lead here to the use of forms which can almost be called geometrical" p. 53. See also Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), pp. 174-75.

fallen modern City in Stephen's definition of the aesthetic emotion (a metaphor which repeats his Icarian vision and his angelic yearning for "seraphic" embraces)⁵⁷ finds its equivalent, as I have tried to suggest, in Roquentin's obsessive yearning, despite what he has "seen" from such vantage points, for heights which are "in another world" beyond "our time." His religious rhetoric further reveals the same ontological dualism that idealizes a form of aesthetic eternity, i.e. necessity at the expense of the historical life, a dualism, in other words, that has its ultimate source in the dread of being adulterated by the obscene generative energies of finite existence or, more broadly, of being overwhelmed by no-thingness, by the contingencies, the ungraspable or unnameable and thus uncertain motion, of historical time. Indeed, Roquentin's priestly revulsion from the obscenity of matter and history—"the shame of existence"—is, as we have seen, so great that he must share with Stephen Dedalus the onus of epitomizing a modern contempt for the world (*contemptus mundi*) as great and dehumanizing as any medieval version of it.⁵⁸ If, therefore, Stephen represents the solipsistic and mystifying Symbolist imagination, it is difficult to conclude otherwise than that Roquentin's religion of art, his aesthetic urge to "wash himself of the sin of existing" by writing a novel which will be the equivalent of a band of steel or, more definitively, a Platonic circle, is a betrayal of Sartre's existential—by which I mean anti-metaphysical—phenomenology. Like Stephen, Roquentin as artist, in other words, has no capacity for the being-in-the-world that his experiences in the public park and on the hill overlooking Bouville demand from him, no capacity, that is, for what Keats called Negative Capability and Hedeigger, *Gelassenheit*, an ability to let the dreadful sublimity of Nothing (or Being) *be*. Instead, like so many Modernists before him, he is driven by the dread of and the consequent Will to Power over existence to spatialize time, to coerce temporality into

⁵⁷ Joyce, *Portrait*, p. 217. See *La Nausée*, p. 232, where Roquentin refers to himself as "Swimming in beatitudes."

⁵⁸ Yeats, too, often refers to finite existence in similar negative religious terms, though always with a redemptive ambiguity. See, for example, "The Dolls." Only when the instrument of Yeats's body began to break down did this great Modernist begin to perceive the postmodern possibilities of celebrating the unnameable—and open—nothingness of temporality. But even at this stage, the aesthetic imagination's ability to "scorn the earth" and "Deliver us from the crime of death and birth" ("A Dialogue of Self and Soul") continues to have a powerful inhibiting hold on Yeats' consciousness.

artistic shape, that is, to reify Nothingness in order to be able to take hold of it, to man-age or man-ipulate it.⁵⁹

VI

The critics who identify Roquentin and Sartre from beginning to end and go on to say that Sartre has not yet arrived at an existential philosophy of engagement conclude that *La Nausée* itself is the work that Roquentin was to write. Hazel Barnes, for example, says:

It concludes with Roquentin's reflection on the type of book he will write in order that he may, in part, justify his existence by inserting in the midst of its flux a little bit of gem-like Being. It must not be history or biography again . . . It will probably be a novel. Actually, of course, it will be and has been—*Nausea*.⁶⁰

Michael Edwards brings *La Nausée* a little more up to date—from *fin de siècle* aestheticism to Modernist Symbolism—but his more sophisticated argument is virtually the same:

. . . *La Nausée* is the fiction which it discusses—not the book that Roquentin thinks of composing, since he postulates that no 'existent' can be its subject, but quite simply, Sartre's book, of the type described by its "hero" in its final pages. For Sartre, "Roquentin" is not an existence but a fiction; though partly autobiographical, he is only a projection of his creator's experience and suffering in the way that "Some of These Days" projects into the essentiality of art the "ennui" of its composer; his story is one which "would not happen" since it constitutes an "adventure," articulated by the "récit préfabriqué" of *La Nausée* itself—rigorously constructed, capable of infinite repetition—whereas, any similar experience which occurred to Sartre in the real world occurred (according to the tenets of the novel) amorphously and meaninglessly

"The deconstructive critics following Jacques Derrida would object here to the "moralistic," i.e. "metaphysical" or "humanistic," evaluation of literary activity. In response, I would point to the fact that this "moral" impulse, however hidden, constitutes the ultimate foundation of Derrida's critique of logocentrism. I refer the reader to the central passage of "Structure, Sign and Play," quoted above in footnote 9, where the inhibiting of free play by a logocentric ground immobilizes motion and generates "a reassuring certitude" with which "anxiety can be mastered." See also Paul de Man, "Criticism and Crisis": "The Human mind will go through amazing feats of distortion to avoid facing 'the nothingness of human matters,'" p. 18.

Hazel Barnes, *Humanistic Existentialism: The Literature of Possibility* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1959), p. 203.

in the plan of time. Fictive surrogate of the real Sartre, Roquentin suffers, throughout *La Nausée*, like the "little melody" of the jazz song, "en mesure."⁶¹

What these critics are telling us, it is important to emphasize, is that Sartre's novel posits the ontological priority of form (Being) over temporality: *that it is the literary equivalent of a Platonic Circle*, a Byzantine mosaic, or a Symbolist novel, which means—as Barnes's allusion to Pater's aesthetic inadvertently suggests—that Sartre's *Kunstwollen*, to use Worringer's language, is seen to be an equivalent desire "to wrest the object of the external world out of its natural context; out of the unending flux of being, to purify it of all its dependence upon life, i.e. of everything about it that was arbitrary, to render it necessary and irrefragable to approximate it to its *absolute value*."

As Edwards' effort to find the "spatial" technique of *The Waste Land* in *La Nausée* suggests, this interpretation of the form of Sartre's novel, I submit, has its source in a hermeneutic method modelled on the Symbolist novel. That is, just as the Symbolist novel *is* or, rather, is intended *to be*, i.e. an object that is seen simultaneously as spatial form, so this method insists on the suspension of the temporal process until the end when the mind's *eye can see* all the juxtaposed and self-reflexive images—the whole picture—laid out in space, as it were. As Joseph Frank put this Modernist hermeneutic methodology (without prejudice):

Aesthetic form in modern poetry, then, is based on a space logic that demands a complete re-orientation in the reader's attitudes towards language. Since the primary reference of any word-group is to something inside the poem itself, language in modern poetry is really reflexive: the meaning-relationship is completed only by the simultaneous perception in space of word-groups which, when read consecutively in time, have no comprehensive relation to each other. Instead of the instinctive and immediate [read "primordial"] reference of words and word-groups to the objects or events they symbolize, and the construction of meaning from the sequence of their references, *modern poetry asks its readers to suspend the process of individual reference temporarily until the entire pattern of internal references can be apprehended in a unity*.⁶²

⁶¹ Michael Edwards, "La Nausée—A Symbolist Novel," p. 19.

⁶² "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," pp. 229-30, my emphasis.

Thus, to appropriate from Heidegger's postmodern project to "surpass metaphysics," this "objective" or "disinterested" interpretive methodology becomes in fact an idealistic version of "re-counting": a mystified logocentric hermeneutics of time as sheer presence. It becomes, that is, like all interpretive methodologies modelled on metaphysics (the perception of being *meta-ta-physika*), a privileged "awaiting which makes present and forgets," a "deliberative" or "calculating" awaiting, which, grounded as it is on the certain expectation of formal "unity"—that the "whole picture" will reveal itself—tends to coerce a temporal medium into an in-clusive object. In thus re-collecting time (a dispersed eternity) into closed circle (icon), this interpretive method closes off, becomes "blind" to the possibility of a more original—a phenomenological—understanding of the text. That is, this mnemonic method which we can now call a hermeneutics of Recollection (the term adopted by Kierkegaard to expose the aestheticism, the infinite negativity, of Hegel's ontology,⁶³ forgets that temporality (difference) is ontologically prior to Being (Identity) and thus precludes an understanding in which meaning is infinitely open to re-interpretation.⁶⁴ To be specific, it over-looks (forgets), as I have tried to show, Roquentin's progressive re-appropriation of the traditional logocentric rhetoric of a distancing religious vision in behalf of art that his experience, especially in the park and on the heights overlooking Bouville, has deconstructed. It becomes, that is, blind in its insight to Sartre's ultimate calling into question of Roquentin's "aesthetic solution."

A Symbolist novel, despite the conservative appearance of its experimentation, is precisely what Sartre has not written. On the contrary, read temporally, or, in Heidegger's terms, with "anticipatory resoluteness"⁶⁵ as Sartre appears to insist in his famous

⁶³ The term "Recollection" (*Er-Innerrung*) plays a crucial role in Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. For an illuminating analysis of the "circuitous journey" of Hegelian "recollection"—without reference to Kierkegaard's critique, however—see M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, pp. 225-237.

⁶⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Sect. 68, pp. 388-89. See also my essay, "Heidegger, Kierkegaard, and the Hermeneutic Circle: Towards a Postmodern Theory of Interpretation as Dis-closure," *boundary 2*, 4 (Winter 1976), 472-73.

⁶⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Sect. 67, p. 387. In contrast to the "awaiting that makes present and forgets," "anticipatory resoluteness" [*vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*] is grounded in *care* (interest) and, as the etymology of the noun—its relation to *Erschlossenheit* (disclosedness)—suggests,

essay, "Francois Mauriac and Freedom,"⁶⁸ written in February 1939, i.e. at about the time of the publication of the novel, the form of *La Nausée* is understood to be the antithesis of "gemlike Being." And it exists ultimately, as I have been suggesting, not only as an obvious destruction of the linear nineteenth-century "realistic" novel, but also, and in a way more fundamentally, of the novel Roquentin envisages—whether formulated as a Modernist novel of spatial form or, as in the case of Edith Kern, a *Künstlerroman*, in which the circuitous journey of the hero/author precipitates Poetry as salvation from existence. What I am suggesting is that the source is neither, say, Schlegel's *Lucinde* nor Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* nor Gide's *The Counterfeiters* nor Joyce's *Portrait*, but rather a proto-antinovel (which also destroys the *Künstlerroman* as well) like *Notes from Underground*. It is true that, like the Proustian novel, the "form" of Sartre's work refuses to fulfill the obsessive expectations of the bourgeois structure of consciousness for comforting, useful and rational "solutions" to the "problems" of existence. It refuses to assume the preterite structure of *Eugénie Grandet*, the bourgeois well-made work, in which discords are resolved in the "Aristotelian" sense of adventure, that is, by imposing a *necessary* plot, a causal beginning, middle, and end on the contingent. But, on the other hand, and despite the appearance of circular structure, Sartre's novel also refuses to fulfill the formal imperatives of symbolism, which, however preferable an

in an opening, a freedom, tethered to actuality that "repeats" that which is being interpreted, i. e., makes it new. Repetition, which "recollects forward," is, of course, Kierkegaard's (and Heidegger's) phenomenological/existential alternative to the spatializing of the Platonic/Hegelian Recollection.

⁶⁸ "The thick substance I brew as I read *The Possessed* is my own expectancy, my own time. For a book is either a mere stack of dry leaves or else a great form in motion, in other words, the act of reading.... In order for the duration of my impatience and ignorance to be caught and then moulded and finally presented to me as the flesh of these creatures of my invention, the novelist must know how... to hollow out in his book, by means of the signs at his disposal, a time resembling my own, one in which the future does not exist. If I suspect the hero's future actions are determined in advance... my own time ebbs back into me; there remains only myself, reading and persisting, confronted by a static book. Do you want your characters to live? See to it that they are free." *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, tr. Annette Michelson (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 7. Sartre is, of course, primarily speaking of novelistic technique. But his point against teleology or spatialization clearly applies to hermeneutics as such.

alternative for Sartre to positivism, remained mystified (in the Tradition) because the Symbolist imagination failed to understand the spatial origins of the positivistic consciousness and, thus, its relation to Symbolist form. *La Nausée*, that is, also refuses to fulfill the Symbolist version of the urge to objectify existence: the urge to solipsistic abstraction in which the discords of contingency are transcended in the "Platonic" sense of "adventure," when the privileged moment is expanded infinitely to "totalize" or encompass existence within the circular and substantial All. For in both cases, as we have seen, the will to power, the imposition of necessity on contingency, of objectness on nothing, negates the openendedness of existence and the "humanizing" burden of freedom.

Looked at superficially, i.e. read re-collectively, of course, *La Nausée* appears, like Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* or Eliot's *Four Quartets*, to articulate a circular structure—"beginning" and "ending" in The Rendezvous des Cheminots with Roquentin contemplating the jazz tune—that spatializes the time of the novel and, in re-collecting the difference into identity, thus releases Roquentin (and its reader) from its terrors. Experienced temporally, however—care-fully, as it were—it discloses to the reader, rather, that *La Nausée* takes the form, not of a "finished" story, a *récit préfabriqué* (i.e. a teleologically or spatially conceived artifact), but, like *Notes from Underground*, which "ends" ambiguously with an "editor's" arbitrary termination of "the 'notes' of this paradoxicalist" despite the fact that "he could not resist and continued them,"⁶⁷ of some "notebooks...found among the papers" that Antoine Roquentin has left behind after his disappearance. That is, the circularity does not precipitate Roquentin's liberation from time in the radiant moment of closure when beginning and end meet, are transformed into space, as it does in the epiphanic recurrences of Proust or Yeats or Woolf. On the contrary, as his disappearance and the abandoned notebooks suggest, Roquentin, like his offspring Estragon and Vladimir in *Waiting For Godot*, is hurled into rather than released from existence, an existence in which closure is infinitely deferred. In other words, *the structural "circularity" of La Nausée and the style of dis-covering it open up and call into question the logocentric circularity of Roquentin's autotelic novel (and the Romantic/Modernist Künstlerromane it appears to resemble)*—and the providential rhetoric it generates. It discloses

⁶⁷ Fedor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*, p. 115.

that in *La Nausée*, temporality is ontologically prior to Form, be-ing to Being. To return to Kierkegaard's and Heidegger's destructive language, it might be claimed that, unlike the Modernist novel, which, in the objectifying or aestheticizing manner of Plato and Hegel, "recollects [the essential] backwards," Sartre's *La Nausée* "recollects [the existential] forwards." The circuitous movement, that is, constitutes the achievement of an authentically new beginning, a "repetition," which "is the *interest* upon which metaphysics [read the perception of being *meta-ta-physika*] founders."⁸⁸ *La Nausée*, in other words, as Roquentin might have said had he chosen to repeat his distinction between *la vie* and *l'aventure*, is an anti-novel. Or, at any rate, it is on the verge of becoming one.

Seen in the light of its temporally discovered as opposed to spatially ordered form, the ambiguous, i. e. open-ended or anti-novel, form of *La Nausée* serves not only the negative function of demystifying Roquentin's logocentric fictional strategy, but also the positive function of demystifying the reader's logocentric expectations of formal unity and thus, as in the pseudonymous works of Kierkegaard, of "assigning him to himself," i. e. to his freedom in the context of contingency, of the not-at-home.⁸⁹ On the one hand, by rejecting a *telos* in favor of repetition—the ontological priority of time over Being—Sartre's decentered open form undermines, reduces by violence, as it were, the reader's privileged conventional, that is, "Aristotelian," expectation of a cathartic or comforting end, an end that makes the experience of anguish safe and even pleasurable from the beginning. In the language of existential phenomenology it reduces the inauthentic impulse to objectify (or spatialize), to find an object for, dread or anxiety (*Angst*), which has no thing as its "object." It thus inhibits the positivistic impulse to *grasp* the nameless, to transform the mystery of existence into a distanced and satisfying utilitarian ontology of necessity or, to use Sartre's metaphor (which may be adapted from Heidegger), to "domesticate" the contingency of nature by way of the creation of the modern bourgeois City. On the other hand, Sartre's decentered form

⁸⁸ Soren Kierkegaard, *Repetition: An Essay in Experimental Psychology*, tr. with "Introduction" and "Notes" by Walter Lowrie (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), p. 33. For a full analysis of this crucial distinction, see my essay, "Heidegger, Kierkegaard, and the Hermeneutic Circle," pp. 463 ff.

⁸⁹ Soren Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life's Way*, tr. Walter Lowrie, (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1945), p. 314. See my essay "Heidegger, Kierkegaard, and the Hermeneutic Circle," pp. 472 ff.

ironically dis-covers the idealistic Platonic/Hegelian impulse to transcend the "shame of existence" by "com-prehending" it⁷⁰—the counterpart of positivism in the ontotheological tradition—to be an aesthetic (angelic)—and futile—flight from Being-in-the-world. In showing Roquentin caught ambiguously between his radical temporality (difference) and his impulse to escape its imperatives for freedom in symbolic flight, Sartre undermines the teleological reader's privileged status, engages him in rather than distances him from the text and his own experience. He generates, that is, an anxious consciousness of its namelessness and of the need to confront its uncertainty responsibly. Put in another way, the emergent anti-novel form of *La Nausée* refuses, on the one hand, to provide answers or solutions (as the Aristotelian well-made work or, what is ultimately the same thing, the detective story, does),⁷¹ to the riddle of human suffering in the face of the incomprehensibility of Nothingness. On the other hand, neither does it act as a stimulant that transports us instantaneously, like Hegel's synthesis, into the totalized paradisaal "other world" of circles, where questions and answers are irrelevant because contradictions have been reconciled into equilibrium, the existential either/or into the aesthetic or ironic neither/nor; in short, where difference has been recollected into identity. Rather, as the uncertain history of the interpretation of *La Nausée* clearly suggests, it generates the radical questions, the *Seinsfragen*, which, like those being-questions Job is driven by existence to ask from the dung heap, "humanizes" the reader, i. e. transforms him into a dialogic partner in the hermeneutic process.⁷²

The "form" of Sartre's *La Nausée*, in other words, is the fictional counterpart of the demystified "metaphysics" and "epistemology" Roquentin discovers in the public park and on the

⁷⁰ M. H. Abrams observes of the "circuitous journey" of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*: "...for consciousness to 'recollect' its own past stages not as the mere succession of events in time, but as 'comprehended history'—history which has been incorporated by consciousness, and so understood in all its necessary dialectic organization—it must have reached the *Wissenschaft* at the end of its educational journey before it can set out upon that journey from its beginning" (*Natural Supernaturalism*, p. 235).

⁷¹ See my essay, "The Detective and the Boundary," pp. 150, 154.

⁷² See Paul Bové, "Cleanth Brooks and Modern Irony: A Kierkegaardian Critique," *boundary 2*, 4 (Spring 1976), 727-59. I am indebted to Professor Bové for a number of important suggestions he made on reading this essay in draft form.

hill overlooking Bouville. I have tried to suggest that the causal or linear time-shape of the well-made work, of *Eugénie Grandet*, for example, is the linear microcosm of the bourgeois metaphysics of positivistic necessity, which in objectifying the objectless dread of nothing ("absurdity") transforms the terrible *de trop* in the end into *something* understandable, predictable, controllable, and useful, thus providing its disciples with a comfortable and arrogant sense of the right to exist, of their certain "at-homeness" in the world. I have also tried to suggest that the geometric form of the Symbolist novel is the microcosm of the idealistic metaphysics of transcendental necessity, which in spatializing temporality achieves an aesthetic distance from its dislocating potential, thus providing its disciples with an equivalent "right to exist," however different its ambience. In contradistinction to both of these versions of meta-physical fiction, the open-ended "shape" of *La Nausée* is a figure of the "anti-metaphysics" of existential phenomenology, which, in acknowledging in its infinite differal of closure the de-centered nature of existence, also acknowledges and enacts the dread of nothing that generates the projective stance of Dasein, the interrogative mood of understanding, in the context of the temporal awareness of its not-at-homeness-in-the-world. It will not allow the reader the comfort of an absolute interpretation—of naming, of "taking hold of," the awful nothingness of the existence which is the subject of Sartre's novel. It is in this sense that the form of *La Nausée* is seen to verge on becoming the formal equivalent of the myth of the anti-Adam who suffers the un-naming in the park, the metamorphosis of the anthropomorphized energies in the world into their original presence-less state as threatening "beasts," when he loses faith in the *logos* as *ratio* and its linguistic analogy, the word. As fiction, Sartre's novel, of course, like all fiction, is a naming that lies. What is different about *La Nausée*, however, is not simply that it is aware of the fact that it is a lie. More important, as I have tried to show, it utilizes artifice to activate the reader's awareness of existence as an absence of presence. Unlike both the traditional ("Aristotelian") and Modern (Symbolist) novel, which exist to cover up difference (fill in the gaps) in the act of naming it, *La Nausée* make differences explicit. It is, then, a naming that un-names. What Sartre achieves by way of his artifice, in short, is an example of Kierkegaard's "mastered irony," which, unlike the concealing irony of Modernist literature (especially of the New Critical view of it), dis-covers to

the reader his being as being-in-the-world and thus engages him in the infinitely open-ended ambiguities of actuality.

Sartre, as I have implied throughout, is perhaps too close to the "metaphysical" Western literary tradition to perceive clearly what he is in fact doing to the fictional forms he inherits from it, too close to perceive the "Copernican revolution" that *La Nausée* achieves in literature.⁷³ Thus, I have had, in the manner of Heidegger *vis-à-vis* Kant, to "destroy" the novel—to wrest by hermeneutic violence the question that perhaps, as Heidegger says of Kant's project, Sartre's vestigial "metaphysical" language and formal assumptions inhibited his asking explicitly. However, once it is seen that *La Nausée* is essentially neither an "Aristotelian" nor a "Symbolist" novel in form and content, that, in fact, it constitutes a destruction of these, then it becomes theoretically and critically what it has been *in fact* for virtually every serious novelist and dramatist since its publication: the turn from Modernism to Postmodernism. With the un-naming in the park and in the fictional form of *La Nausée*, there is signalled the end of the privileged status not only of the beginning/middle/end of realistic works, but also of the formal closure of Symbolist works in the Western literary tradition (including the Romantic *Künstlerroman* with which Edith Kern identifies the novel). Henceforth, as in Beckett, Ionesco, Sarraute, Robbe-Grillet, Barth, Pynchon, Olson, Ammons and even critics such as Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man bear witness, literature and the discussion of it will be characterized, above all, by the problematic—but also liberating—relationship between the word and things dis-closed by Sartre:

Not that Watt desired information, for he did not. But he desired words to be applied to his situation, to Mr. Knott, to the house, to the grounds, to his duties, to the stairs, to the bedroom, to the kitchen, and in a general way to the conditions of being in which he found himself. For Watt now found himself in the midst of things which, if they consented to be named, did so as it were with reluctance. And the state in which Watt found himself resisted formulation in a way no state had ever done, in which Watt had ever found himself, and Watt had found himself in a great many states in his day. Looking at a pot, for example, in thinking of a pot, at one of Mr. Knott's pots, of one of Mr. Knott's pots, it

⁷³ See Robbe-Grillet's critique of the vestigial metaphysics of *La Nausée* in "Nature, Humanism, Tragedy," *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction*, tr. Richard Howard (New York: Grove Press, 1965).

was in vain that Watt said, Pot, pot. Well, perhaps not quite in vain, but very nearly. For it was not a pot, the more he looked the more he reflected, the more he felt sure of that, that it was not a pot at all. It resembled a pot, it was almost a pot, but it was not a pot of which one could say, Pot, pot, and be comforted.⁷⁴

The self-reflecting mirror-effect by which a work of fiction asserts, by its existence, its separation from empirical reality, its divergence, as a sign, from a meaning that depends for its existence on the constitutive activity of this sign, characterizes the work of literature in its essence.⁷⁵

From the point of view of the literary tradition, this turn, as I have hinted at in my own critical rhetoric, is a moment in the emergent postmodern effort to repeat or retrieve (*wiederholen*)⁷⁶ in all its original force *and for our time* the tradition of the sublime, the tradition that invokes that being which is dreadful (and ennobling) precisely because the imagination cannot comprehend (take hold of) it. It is, of course, the tradition that has its "origins" in the pre-Socratics and which ever since Longinus' effort to methodologize (name) it, has been increasingly forgotten by the Western literary imagination, which, from the beginning, even in the effort of the Romantics to retrieve it, has more or less preferred the beautiful instead, that is, as Keats put it, without Negative Capability, has preferred to "reach irritability after fact or reason"⁷⁷ at the

⁷⁴ Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (New York: Grove Press, 1959), p. 81.

⁷⁵ Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays on the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 17.

⁷⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Section 67, p. 388; Sect. 74, pp. 386-86. Heidegger summarizes the retrieve achieved by a destructive hermeneutics as follows in *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959): "To ask How does it stand with being? means nothing less than to recapture, to repeat (*wieder-holen*), the beginning of our historical-spiritual existence, in order to transform it into a new beginning. This is possible. It is indeed the crucial form of history, because it begins in the fundamental event. But we do not repeat a beginning by reducing it to something past and now known, which need merely be imitated; no, the beginning must be begun again, more radically, with all the strangeness, darkness, insecurity that attends a true beginning. Repetition as we understand it is anything but an improved continuation with the old methods of what has been up to now" (p. 32).

⁷⁷ Keats, *Letters*, ed. by Hyder Edward Rollins, I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 192-94. This without saying it directly, is what Iris Murdoch implies in her important postmodern essay "The Sublime and the

expense of the dreadful uncertainties of existence. Seen in this light, the literary moment Sartre activates becomes, in turn, of course, part of the larger moment that Heidegger has referred to as the most important of postmodern projects: the "surpassing" (*Überwindung*) of the coercive, the objectifying, the in-closing metaphysical perspective of the Western ontotheological tradition for the sake of retrieving the mystery of being. As Heidegger summarizes his project:

Calculative thought [of Western ontotheology] places itself under compulsion to master everything in the logical terms of its procedure. It has no notion that in calculation everything calculable is already a whole before it starts working out its sums and products [this is the coercive spatialization of time], a whole whose unity naturally belongs to the incalculable which, with its mystery, ever eludes the clutches of calculation. That which, however, is always and everywhere closed at the outset to the demands of calculation and, despite that, is always closer to man in its enigmatic unknowableness than anything that "is," than anything he may arrange and plan, this can sometimes put the essential man in touch with a thinking whose truth no "logic" can grasp. This thinking whose thoughts not only do not calculate but are absolutely determined by what is "other" than what-is, might be called essential thinking.⁷⁸

When the form of Sartre's novel is experienced as something akin to an enactment in language of the dreadful un-naming in the park rather than a geometric shape that radiates gem-like flame, the broad parallel with Heidegger becomes evident. There are, of course, important differences based on Sartre's essentially anthropological (as opposed to ontological) project, which must not be overlooked. But these have been rehearsed over and over again ever since Heidegger called Sartre's project "metaphysical"⁷⁹ and are by this time familiar. What needs to be said now, at this late

Beautiful Revisited," *Yale Review*, 49 (December 1959), 247-71. Ms. Murdoch's conclusions about Sartre, based on what she calls his Hegelian "totalitarianism," are quite different from mine. In the end she places him among the Symbolists.

⁷⁸ Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Existence and Being*, p. 357.

⁷⁹ Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," tr. Edgar Lohner in William Barrett and Henry D. Aiken, eds., *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, III (New York: Random House, 1962), 280.

date in the history of modernism, is that Sartre's impulse to "surpass" the Western will to power, the obsession to grasp existence, by naming it, is more fundamental. And in its refusal to spatialize form in favor of letting be, it points to an "essential thinking" about literary language and its object that allies, if it does not identify, the Sartre of *La Nausée* with Heidegger's (if not precisely with Derrida's) postmodern project (*a-letheia*) to *dis-cover* or to *dis-close*, and remember, the primordial be-ing as *difference* that a mystified and logocentric Western anthropomorphism (humanism) has buried, or closed off and forgotten.

Arnold and Tennyson: *The Plight of Victorian Lyricism as Context of Modernism*

There is an elaborate body of critical discourse on the complex affinities and disjunctures between Romantic and Modernist revolutions in English poetry. Yet these discussions usually ignore Victorian poetry, granting in effect the slogans by which Eliot, Yeats, and their peers branded their predecessors as passive and rhetorical victims of dissociated sensibility.¹ I want, however, not to deny these charges but to examine their possible causes, the sophisticated ways in which the Victorians gave expression to their cultural plight, and the impact of some Victorian dilemmas on modernist themes and lyric strategies. In order to demonstrate the tensions which critics of Victorian poetry tend to overlook—in the process also limiting our appreciation of the problems inherited by early modernists—I shall concentrate on reading some poems by Arnold and Tennyson in what I take to be a dialectical fashion. That is, I shall not read the poems as embodying representative Victorian beliefs, but shall take the modernism they bred as locus for establishing themes and modes of poetic thinking we can *a posteriori* locate in the poems, even if we are not clear whether the

*Charles Altieri, Professor of English at the University of Washington, has published extensively on nineteenth and twentieth century poetry.

¹My view of Victorian poetry is obviously heavily influenced by Eliot and Yeats, although I hope to show how much art and insight go into the Victorian poetic renderings of the spiritual conditions later poets would react against. Eliot's strictures boil down to three charges—an attack on dissociation of sensibility, an insistence that the Victorians' confusion of religion, morals, and art betokened a general "dissolution of thought" in the age, and a critique of their tendency to hypostasize states of consciousness and moods because they lacked lucid analyses and dramatic control. See Eliot's *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950), hereafter abbreviated *SE*, especially "The Metaphysical Poets," "In Memoriam," "Arnold and Pater," as well as "From Poe to Valery" in *To Criticize the Critic* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1965). For Yeats's critiques, see especially the "Preface" to his *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936). There Yeats recognizes the inadequacy of his earlier attacks on rhetorical aspects of Victorian poetry and tries to define as the specific destructive quality of Victorian rhetoric its passivity "before a mechanized nature" (p. xxvii).

meanings were fully intentional. My focus, after all, is not on Victorian social beliefs but on imaginative versions of Victorian spiritual conditions which may reveal history by transcending the age's standard descriptive predicates.

From this way of reading, three basic problems emerge which remain central in modernist poetics. The largest problem is a question of the nature of the authority the mind or imagination can rely on to judge actions or define values. Moral and metaphysical modes of assessment divide from one another, leaving the writer torn between authority external to the self, whether it be culture, tradition or society, and a private privileged ontological vision that seems to demand "authenticity" and endless self-expression. Second, as poets come more to dwell on the margins of a society increasingly trusting empirical and utilitarian modes of analysis, the claims to truth of prose lucidity and those of the lyrical imagination seem extremely difficult to reconcile. Consequently both self-expression and lyric emotion threaten to become evasion rather than clarification of objective conditions. This opposition breeds a third tension—between an increasingly desperate sense of lyric as mere self-expressive cry and the possibility of discovering within the cry some principle of deep psychic life, some shadow in the mind, which the poet can make a basis for states of lyric prayer.

II

At least the first of these problems requires no claims about dialectic. The problem of defining adequate forms of spiritual authority is evident in almost any serious piece of Victorian prose. Yet even here later modernist renderings of this dilemma help us recover some basic affective and structural features in representative poems like Arnold's "Empedocles on Etna." My prime example of an insufficiently complex grasp of the relation between modernist ironies and Victorian poetic texture can be my own work.² In a

² I make this essentially metaphysical use of "Empedocles" in "Steps of the Mind in T. S. Eliot's Poetry," *Bucknell Review*, 22 (1976), 180-207 and "Objective Image and Act of Mind in Modern Poetry," *PMLA*, 91 (1976), 101-114. Both these essays must serve as support for what here will appear as easy generalizations about modern poetry and about rhetorical terms like the distinction between metonymy and metaphor. I should add that the reading of "Empedocles" I offer here was stimulated by an excellent moral reading of the poem given in my seminar by John McGowan.

previous discussion of Arnold's poem, I had seen it as dramatizing the consequences for the humanist of losing faith in a rational universe objectively grounding the mind's authority to proclaim general values. When Empedocles achieves the summit sought by visionary questers from Petrarch to Wordsworth, when the mind should be able to celebrate its power over all its surveys, Empedocles finds himself standing on a volcanic "charred, blackened, melancholy waste" which can at any time erupt in chaos. I took Empedocles as he takes himself, that is as epistemological tragic hero, victimized by his own lucidity. I did not see then how the poem also sustains another set of interpretive predicates which partially validate a moral reading of the poem. One cannot easily reject Callicles' view of Empedocles as "half-mad," nor deny that Empedocles' own despairing refusal to admit change and to accept the loss of his earlier feelings makes him morally responsible for his own plight. Empedocles' eventual rejection of his own advice to Pausanias about accepting limits becomes an ironic reminder of his ultimately self-destructive ambition:

In vain our pent wills fret
And would the world subdue.
Limits we did not set
Condition all we do;

Born into life we are, and life must be our mould (I, 182-186).

Modernism should have taught me not to impose a resolution on these contradictory readings, but rather to reflect on the implications of their incompatibility. One part of Arnold, the part given expression in the "1853 Preface," no doubt prefers the moral reading, but even this Arnoldian voice of sanity recognizes that moral terms will not impose a satisfying order on the poem's energies. For any moral language we employ to judge Empedocles becomes in turn susceptible to Empedocles' judgments of social authority as he ascends the mountain emblematic of self-conscious lucidity. Our moral judgments borrow their terms from an order Empedocles seems to understand and to reject. We find our judgments of his nihilism themselves judged (albeit problematically), and we must recognize that our moral predicates admit of no more encompassing authority than that of an inadequate social order. And with no secure order behind society, we are threatened by two equally problematic sets of values—those of the tragic attitude longing for limits and those associated with notions of a radical "authenticity" justified by the

sense that these limits are merely arbitrary constraints. The Enlightenment had bred the dream that pure lucidity could conquer superstitious myths (like those of Callicles and Pausanias) while still showing coherent and related rational structures in self, society, and cosmos. For the Victorians the dream had become a partial nightmare: they could not renounce lucidity, but neither could they adapt themselves to the increasing relativism it created as it demonstrated the possible rationality of incompatible interpretive systems. Rationalism bequeathed them only empiricism and its demonic enemy twin—a scepticism admitting endless forms of self-dramatizing authenticity.

These conflicting perspectives come to a climax in the poem's second act, where Arnold both recognizes the moral inadequacy of Empedocles' stance and yet cannot but in large part identify with him. Now "alone" on the summit of Etna, Empedocles views his own prudential advice as mere "social debt" (II, 7), not binding on a consciousness that sees through the shams of society. But without society, one must seek the ground of his being in a pure unmediated relation to a cosmic order, itself no longer amenable to human value terms. This leaves Empedocles with endlessly regressive self-reflections he can escape only by denying consciousness itself and opting for unity with a chaotic pre-social order. In his pursuit of a self-authenticating condition of consciousness, Empedocles ironically must define his tragic identity in negative terms. Memory, the great Wordsworthian faculty for renouncing apocalyptic desire and coming to terms with loss, becomes for Empedocles just a sad register of differences between his triumphant past and his present plight (II, 235-75). Similarly the Romantic dream of a numinous nature, whose energies might soothe the mind by revealing structures of significance responsive to its needs, serves now only to deepen isolation and place the burden of thought completely on the individual lyric voice. The world may brim "with life" (II, 308), the landscape he sees from the mountain may live "with held-in joy swelling its heart," but Empedocles' "I" has no way of connecting to that life. "I alone/Am dead to life and joy, and therefore I read/In all things my own deadness" (II, 320-22). Empedocles here plays Sartre to Wordsworth's Heidegger; the more fully one can register a blossoming self-emergence in the world outside the self, the more desperately one becomes aware of his own lack of full being.

This definition by negation clarifies the plight of moral analysis. Standard moral terms give a clear definition of Empedocles' error,

but they depend on affirmations neither Empedocles nor Arnold's lyric emotions can sustain. For Empedocles only the lyric intensity of his immediate encounter with his situation matters: he rejects not simply specific moral arguments but argument itself, and the monologue of the mind with itself is deprived of any point of reference or rest. Thus, when Callicles tries to soothe the raging philosopher, Arnold gives him the traditional method of narrative moral exemplum. But Empedocles, with only his own subjective immediacy as standard for truth, systematically misreads the narratives as analogues for his own grievances. When Callicles uses the tale of Typho as credible example of the need to accept moral authority, Empedocles ignores the argument in order to identify with Typho in a self-pitying affirmation of moral rebellion (II, 90-120). He defends the "brave impetuous heart" against "the subtle contriving head," so that all moral predicates are not judged in terms of truth but of adequacy to feeling. Given this reversal of humanistic values, we find ourselves somewhere between Kierkegaard's "Knight of faith" and Nietzsche's superman. Empedocles has only a Miltonic lyric fustian without Milton's cosmic order. Empedocles becomes a perfect version of Harold Bloom's strong poet and marks the beginning of a time when the Calliclean poet as lyric moralist or maker of pastoral songs must be replaced by the strong, noble, and terrifyingly private voice of the authentic self-expressive poet who offers philosophical claims while denying any framework except expressive power in which those arguments might be evaluated.

It is not surprising, then, that in the reflexive critical stance of his essay Arnold tries to exorcise Empedocles. But Arnold's exorcism depends on historical and social categories which do not stand up very well against Empedocles' ironies. If social life condemns one to vacillating between excessive self-consciousness and an "unbearable" "absence from himself" (II, 220-26), and if Empedocles is obviously the only undeluded analyst of the world presented in the poem, his critic must find more complex terms for judgment than Arnold does. It may be that Empedocles' laments are a necessary result of seeing modern life steadily and seeing it whole. Arnold's attempt to reject this vision on largely traditional and psychological terms may be no more than elegant versions of Pausanias' superstitions. The inevitable possibility arises that Arnold's role as prose moralist might itself evade the age's spiritual condition under the mask of judging it. If, as Pausanias asserts, "the wind-borne, mirroring soul/A thousand glimpses wins, And never sees a whole"

(I, 83-85), both Arnold's social and his aesthetic dreams of an order won by scrupulous attention to "the Empire of Facts" seem mere nostalgia. This nostalgia, I might add, is very much like the one that drives Empedocles to his summit. Even the stance of critical distance so necessary to Arnold's claim grows problematic when we see how it may be precisely the defensive rhetorical illusion Arnold needs in order to gain the imaginative freedom of indulging the part of himself identified with Empedocles' final speeches. Perhaps psychology, morality, and reasoned criticism are essentially what Nietzsche would soon insist are only justifications for our refusing to ascend the mountain and look into the volcano, where we might recognize the ultimate chaos which is the final reward of our pursuit of lucidity.

III

"Empedocles on Etna" takes on a central place in Arnold's poetic career when we recognize how deeply its tensions, and Arnold's failure to exorcise "Empedocles" despite his criticisms of it, stem from unresolvable weaknesses in Arnold's attempt to make culture perform the metaphysical and ethical functions of religion. He envisions culture as a secular means for restating the grounds of Romantic dialectics between a creative ground—where one reads an objective higher nature for man and finds stimulus to self-expression that immediately implicates universal concerns—and a creative mind that in pursuing its own teleological impulses articulates imaginative orders at once transcending and perfecting the empirical self. This interplay of creative nature and creative mind allows the poet to base his speculations in an empirical order while also revealing the paucity of merely empirical analysis and projecting out of implicit patterns in this natural ground a symbolic structure which can give objective communal status to the mind's deepest forces. Ideally this interplay discloses a possible middle ground between rational lucidity and impulses to authentic self-expression. It creates the possibility of an ethics that can transcend the merely social while not relying on traditional metaphysics.

Both Arnold's dream and its weaknesses are best summarized in the dual implications of his view of poetry as "criticism of life" that need "neither applaud nor revile" the age but "know what it is, what it can give them, and whether this is just what they want." On the one hand, then, poetry as criticism becomes a tool of lucid analysis

while, on the other, it establishes an ideal order for judging what it describes and for situating the poet in a moral, even an ontological realm, free of the empirical contradictions he describes. Yet the enormous gulf between the critical and the reconstructive visions is not easily bridged.³ In much of Arnold's poetry the descriptive and the judgmental acts pull against one another, leaving as ground for lyric emotion only an Empedoclean sense of despairing isolation from any secure order or community. Even in his prose, where Arnold tries to substitute the spirit of Aurelius for that of Empedocles, the vision of culture often comes dangerously close to simple cult of personal sensibility. It is a long way from *Paideia* to championing "a spirit, not so much of gladness and elation, as of gentleness and sweetness, a delicate and tender sentiment which is less than joy and more than resignation," a spirit that overpowers by "the charm of a character of such purity, delicacy, and virtue." When this already enervated humanism in flight from its own scepticism must meet the test of poetic expression, two characteristic tendencies emerge—each deriving from inherent weaknesses in Arnold's image of culture. First, the gulf between empirical and ideal orders reveals itself clearly in the unstable nature of the authority Arnold can claim for moral values not sanctioned by metaphysics or rigorous logic. That culture proposes ideals of behavior is unquestionable; that these ideals can be coherently related to concrete situations is extremely problematic. Poetry in this situation is likely to lapse into Empedoclean laments about the gulf between the given and the imagined, especially when one recognizes that culture ideals best retain their power when contemplatively divorced from action.⁴ In the poems, at least up to the 1860's, the past offers an intense metaphoric reality, and, as Paul de Man and others have shown, metaphors best retain their life and meaning when entertained as fictions. They retain it so well, in fact, that one is tempted to prefer the meditative space they generate to the confusions of empirical experience. The dream of an ideal cultural order in the past can produce the same passive endless dialogue of the subjective mind with itself that is

³For my general sense of Arnold, I am indebted to A. Dwight Culler, *Imaginative Reason: The Poetry of Matthew Arnold* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1966).

⁴My discussion of authority is much indebted to Northrop Frye, *The Critical Path* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1970) and "The Problem of Spiritual Authority in the Nineteenth Century," and other essays in *The Stubbish Structure* (London: Methuen, 1970).

produced in Empedocles by his dreams of an ideal cosmic order. And second, Arnold's particular vision of culture as a critical tool keeps forcing Arnold back on his subjective problems while ironically complicating his efforts to achieve a personal voice. For Arnold wants to be both lyricist and moral analyst, so he is continually both expressing and judging himself. The result is an acute tension between personal cries and a distanced public language which effectively muffles those cries while coming to seem more self-defensive than genuinely analytic. Arnold leaves modern poetry the difficult task of needing to reconcile public and private voices.

Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" and "Scholar Gypsy" are to the moral exhortations of Arnold's prose what *The Wasteland* is to Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent." In both cases the poems take up the same issues as the prose but ask one further question, make one last twist of the knife. Consider the way Arnold's poems self-consciously reverse Romantic lyric epiphanies. Because Arnold realizes that the very process of pursuing cultural ideals leaves one on the other side of nature, his poems must reconcile the mind to its own products and place in history, to human not to external nature. If such a reconciliation is to be achieved, it cannot be done in moments of highly charged symbolic vision. In place of the epiphanic moment, we find the inescapable discursiveness of a mind whose attempts to recognize itself and know its place generate a discourse only prevented from being endless by a speaker's acceptance of his despair. When one needs a total vision of a cultural authority adequate to overcome his alienation from the present, one is not likely to find a satisfying dramatic image or objective correlative synthesizing the various strands of the discourse. "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," for example, places its central self-reflexive turn immediately after a typical Romantic meditation on the present scene. The poet turns on himself and recognizes his alienation, "And what am I, that I am here?" (66). But this "here" will not produce any possible dialectical resolution of mind and scene. The poem's only answer to that question is in effect, "I am one who will never be *here*; I have given my heart away to an ideal faith that only mocks present experience." The speaker's basic analogue for himself and for his public rhetoric, whose very lucidity and power further deepen his isolation, is not a natural scene or a positive model like Aurelius, but a cultural history of exiles. Culture still gives ideal versions of the self, but now it becomes a history of those whose ideals have failed; culture

itself becomes only another dead religion, at once oppressive and inescapable in the impotence of its monumental grandeur. Where the prose Arnold sees culture as the solution of problems, the poetic one seeks only release from its oppressive metaphorical appeal:

Be man henceforth no more a prey
To those out-dated stings again!
The nobleness of grief is gone—
Ah, leave us not the fret alone! (105-08).

"The Scholar Gypsy" is darker yet, because it makes a better ironic use of Romantic structures to elicit the final irony, that culture itself can only be preserved as an ideal or a metaphor, and hence will always paralyze or exile those seduced by its nobility. The poem repeats the three part dialectical structure of the greater Romantic lyric—an initial pastoral state breeds a disillusioned rejection of enchantment which in turn motivates a symbolic recovery of what has been lost so that the Future remains open. Arnold resolves his oppositions by transposing the gypsy into an image of the vitality of powers "undiverted to the world without" (162). But the moment of dialectical recovery leads quickly to a fourth ironic movement where Arnold does not possess the gypsy but is possessed by him. Now the Romantic dream of being rooted in one clear perpetual place leads only to a tragic sense of the gap between what Paul de Man has described as the split between conceptual and empirical selves. The very ideals the gypsy symbolizes can only be maintained as concepts, as exiled from the confusion of empirical experience:

Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern
From her false friends approach in Hades turn,
Wave us away, and keep thy solitude...
But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife...
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest. (207-10, 221-25)

Ideally culture provides both the distance from one's immediate situation and the terms for judging it which enable us to make dissatisfaction the impetus for developing our potential best selves. But in this poem there is, as in "Empedocles," no dialectic between ideals and possible actions; what is without society can keep its

power only by preserving its sheerly conceptual status and maintaining an absolute difference from the realm of actions. Humanism comes to its final paradox—under the pressure of empirical lucidity cultural ideals can retain their power only to the extent that one does not try to apply them. Now the classical exemplar is not Aeneas but Dido. The suicidal preserver of her abstract identity is a more appropriate exemplum than the man of action, whose practical pursuit of his ideals only led him to perpetuate an order of violence.

The gap between imaginative structures and empirical experience has another, more immediate danger in the confusions among levels of language it produces when one reflects on his private experience. The man of culture can only keep his best self in focus if he continually interprets his experience in public terms, in a language that allows comparison with classical models and ideals of order. Yet in the nineteenth century (and again in the twentieth), there remains a need for self-realization and self-expression. An agent is not content to be typical but wants to use types in order to clarify his particular experiences and work out his own autonomous pursuit of self-perfection. But how approach the realities of one's empirical experiences when he only trusts public and traditional concepts? How reconcile public and private selves without some desperate assertion of private experience as too deep and too authentic to be clarified by any mediating structures.⁵ Consider Arnold's love poems. "Dover Beach" rather desperately and impersonally responds to public problems of faith and value with a purely personal ideal of love, an ideal ironically belied by an impersonal and abstract language. The Marguerite poems and "The Buried Life," on the other hand, present private problems in an abstract, distanced public language. Arnold's image of himself as an exile is especially poignant

⁵E. D. H. Johnson, *The Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1950), has a good discussion of the split between private fantasies and public, authoritative voices in Victorian poetry, but he roots it too much in demands of the audience and does not fully see the problem as caused by divisions within the poet's own psyche. At the other extreme, Norman Holland, "Prose and Minds: A Psychoanalytic Approach to Non-Fiction," in George Levine and David Madden, eds., *The Art of Victorian Prose* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 314-338 and in other essays, sees the abstract public quality of Arnold's work as purely psychological defense mechanism. The best comment on the confusion of public and private is Anthony Hecht's poem "Dover Bitch."

because even the image does not give access to self but establishes a public self-definition, a role in an ancient play. Arnold's image of exile only further divides conceptual and empirical orders by making even this self-definition seem a distortion of unutterable private states. It is indeed only the dignified pathos his public images can create which differentiates Arnold's speakers from Laforgue's "Hamlet" and Eliot's "Prufrock."

These tensions between public languages and private experience are nicely presented in the way the fourth and fifth Marguerite poems open. The fourth one begins with the fact of division between the lovers and immediately sets in opposition the roles of sonnet lover and moralist imposing self-righteous imperatives:

We were apart; yet day by day,
I bade my heart more constant be
I bade it keep the world away....

Love becomes a moral issue, tempting Arnold to interpret its failure in general terms which ignore the possible contribution his own self-consciousness might have made to its demise:

The fault was grave! I might have known,
What far too soon, alas! I learned—
The heart can bind itself alone,
And faith may oft be unreturned (7-10)

Similarly, the "yes" with which the fifth poem opens immediately places the love experience on a general allegorical level: the subject matter is not Matt and Marguerite but the general condition they exemplify, and the "yes" indicates that the poem is not a Romantic engagement in emotion recollected in tranquility but the confirmation of an endless generalized dialogue the speaker holds with himself about life.

Two consequences follow from these habits of thinking. First, experience is easily allegorized, but the allegories themselves grow uneasy. The problem is not the difference between allegory and symbol but the trap allegory constitutes for the self. Because the general arguments seem inescapable, single experiences are not examined as such but become sufficient evidence for desperately sad generalizations. The allegories parallel the desperate incisiveness of the summaries of Arnold's society in poems like "The Scholar Gypsy." Consciousness in these poems can only confirm its expectations, not modify them, and the easy success of the allegorizing

images comes to justify what Arnold called his "sad lucidity of soul." The allegory fits; what else need be done except to find the right tragic pose to give dignity to one's desperation. Past and future collapse into a paralyzing Prufrockian present, "Thou hast been, shall be, art, alone" (IV, 30), and a generalized lucidity comes to substitute for attention to specifics and for hope: "And love, if love, of happier men/Of happier men—for they, at least,/Have dreamed two human hearts might blend" (IV, 36-38). Yet life remains and consciousness cannot conform itself entirely to such prognoses. But because language as Arnold conceives it can only present the self in such abstract terms, the second difficulty emerges in the form of parallel temptations to idealize a pure, unknowable buried life whose authenticity is beyond language and to strike personal stances in relation to it which seem highly self-conscious poses, only furthering the alienation the poem seeks to resolve. Analysis becomes self-dramatization and the pose increases the distance from what seems irrecoverably buried. Where the Romantics sought in a dynamic nature a way to keep language and public consciousness open to continual perceptions which could through symbolic mediation give access to deeper private or at least pre-linguistic parts of the self, Arnold leaves modernism a heritage in which the public analytic language of self-consciousness and the dream of a profound, unconscious authenticity are irreconcilable and yet necessary features of human being:

And we have been on many thousand lines,
 And we have shown, in each, spirit and power;
 But hardly have we, for one little hour,
 Been on our own line, have we been ourselves—
 Hardly had skill to utter one of all
 The nameless feelings that course through our breast,
 But they course on for ever unexpressed. ("The Buried Life," 57-63)

IV

If Arnold's characteristic lyric voice is dominated by the pathos of an inexpressible buried life, Tennyson offers us one beautifully modulated opposite—the pathos of voices trapped in restless self-expression. Behind these differences lies the same essential condition, a poetic imagination unable to reconcile the emotional intensity felt necessary for lyric experience with a range of predicates mediating that experience into forms of public discourse capable of adjusting

private needs and available interpretive structures. How reconcile authenticity and shared standards for the intellectual authority of a discourse accountable for "objective" facts? Many of Tennyson's dramatic monologues, for example, concentrate on the dilemma of a speaker who absorbs all the objective features of a scene into his own obsessive concerns, condemning himself to endless and blind repetition of psychic conditions taking their energy largely from the effort to ward off or escape rational lucidity.⁸ As in much contemporary poetry, the failure or refusal to examine the self's condition by reflective analysis of its place in larger dramatic contexts requires the poet to locate his energies in the acts of performing his isolated sensibilities. Then the boundary between performance and posture tends to collapse as the very stress on inwardness only further alienates the speakers from public realities or public terms for deliberating on his actions.

"The Lotus-Eaters" and "Ulysses" illustrate Tennysonian versions of Empedocles' predicament. Where Empedocles makes the choice of a suicidal immediacy with nature because of his mad-denyingly consistent logic, the chorus in "The Lotus-Eaters" only passively and retrospectively explains its choice. Explanation is not description preparatory to action but *a posteriori* rationale for passive lyric cries. This paralysis stems from a Flaubertian clarity about the ironies of empirical lives and loves that offers as its only alternative perennial emotive lamentations "like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong" (165). How empty the meanings in these strong words emerges in "Ulysses." For Tennyson's attempt to write an alternative to "The Lotus Eaters" celebrating the active spirit which

⁸ Robert Langbaum's classic, *The Poetry of Experience* (New York: Random House, 1957), makes a good case for the monologue poem, at least for the Victorians, as a response to Enlightenment tendencies towards relativism and interest in subjective psychology. He fails, I think, to pick up the obsessive qualities of these poems or the sense I shall develop of subjective expression as a trap and limitation on lyric poetry. Among the many other critical works on Victorian poetry that make useful comments on possible relations between Victorian and Modern Poetry, I should mention J. Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963); Gerald Bruns, "The Formal Nature of Victorian Thinking," *PMLA*, 90 (1975), 904-18; John D. Rosenberg, "The Two Kingdoms of *In Memoriam*," *JEGP*, 58 (1959), 228-40; and Alan Sinfield, *The Language of Tennyson's "In Memoriam"* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971). The work most useful to me, because most aware of dialectical tensions in the age's thinking, is Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972).

resists natural entropy reveals how nearly indistinguishable activity and passivity can grow. Ulysses too thinks primarily in terms negating the realms amenable to public discourse about actions. Activity for him is an end in itself, a way of being not responsible to the constraints of doing anything, and he too seeks a form of narcissistic self-consciousness freed from the difficulties and compromises of public moral thought. Desiring to play Empedocles to his son's Pausanias, Ulysses is master of the postured assertion whose real quality is simple negation of restraints: "That which we are, we are,—/...Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will/To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." Intensity here resides in a string of action verbs all intransitive, all unconnected to objects where assessment of the quality of the actions might be possible, and therefore all only lyric acts asserted to warrant a satisfying self-expressive gesture divorced from consequences. It is, thus, not a large jump from "Ulysses" to the condition of Tithonus, a figure compelled to lyricism because he has lost all possible ties to a world of action. In "Tithonus" Aurora occupies a position like the representatives of ordinary empirical life in the other two monologues. By maintaining the natural temporal order, she is capable of love, duty, and above all self-contained silence. Here, though, in making Aurora an admirable figure Tennyson reveals his self-consciousness about the lyric plight. Because Tithonus, by contrast, is trapped in cold powerlessness, he must compensate for his distance from Aurora by performing his plight to himself in endless lyric lamentation where only Miltonic rhetoric can hope to give self-expression the energy and the dignity it cannot win in dramatic or philosophic terms.

Tennyson's presence as poet in these early monologues is not without the same pathetic features we observe in the speakers. The poet, too, tends to become absorbed in the flights of the lyric voice and to lose the critical distance that allows Browning his stance of sympathetic judgment. There are traces of moral analyses. Tennyson has his speakers suggest that their denial of human responsibilities derives from a desire to play God. But, as in "Empedocles," the traces of moral judgment cannot control the ontological weight of lyric despair and pleasure in its own postures. We cannot tell whether we are so deeply moved by Tennyson's failure or by his artful control. When we turn to a later monologue like "Lucretius," we find the same conditions more complexly recognized: we come

to understand Tennyson's understanding of the relationship between his and his speakers' plights.

"Lucretius" can be considered as Tennyson's poetic version of Arnold's prose attempt to comprehend the Empedocles rooted in his imagination. The self-reflexive qualities in Tennyson's poem are most striking in his somewhat clumsy insistence on a moral theme in his conclusion. For again the crucial opposition is between social and ontological dimensions of consciousness or, more specifically, the claims of duty and those of a lucid alienation from social and natural orders. Lucretius' philosophy correlates a sense of cosmos "centered in eternal calm" (79) with a sense of inner order which allows the individual to balance and control his desires by understanding their place in his overall schema for a rational life (207-10, 222, 241-42). But, and this is the poem's finest touch, the speaker of the poem is no longer a man capable of philosophy or of correlating the mind's orders with independent realities. Lucretius the philosopher could not speak a Tennysonian dramatic monologue; it is only when his rationality is destroyed by his wife's potion, by the birth of irrational desire, that he enters the adventure of performing his feelings to himself. The dramatic monologue occurs when desire deprives a man of his powers to shape (23). Then the mind stumbles (123-4), unable to distinguish principles of objective analysis from the tumult of emotional forces.⁷ "Lucretius" anticipates 'Prufrock,' for the dramatic monologue defines itself as the other of philosophical meditation and occupies the paradoxical realm where one at once finds authenticity in his emotional confusions and seeks release from his compulsive expressions. Solipsism is accompanied by a sad suspicion that lucidity requires taking one's endless repetitions as reflecting an absolute truth of human life.

"Lucretius" marks Tennyson's awareness of the end of a Romantic lyricism in which the poet, working at the margins of society, finds

⁷When desire is released, the effects in Lucretius' thinking are remarkably similar to the consequences of denying logocentricity as developed in the work of Derrida and his followers. Freeing of desire leads to a sense of lost origins, to endless supplementation (36-43), and to glimpses of an order of endless differences mocking representational structures and humanistic values (245-52). Also compatible with Derrida is the oscillation between metaphysical and moral languages denying one another's sufficiency. These parallels, however, tempt one to credit Derrida's analytic powers to the participation of his philosophical enterprise in nineteenth-century metaphysical and semantic muddles.

numinous expressive features in nature that parallel and complement his emotional states and then employs these parallels to offer modes of awareness capable of reconstructing social values. Now the only non-mystified form of expression is self-expression which drives one to the limits of society by the compulsive repetition of one's desires. From here to the terrors facing modernism and then returning in confessional poetry the jump is not large. Lucretius' potion opens up a realm of usually repressed desires, and it gives the lyric poet a subject matter perfectly correlated to his age's growing distrust of reason. Lucretius' dream replaces Adam's dream:

A void was made in Nature; all her bonds
Cracked; and I saw the flaring atom-streams
And torrents of her myriad universe,
Ruining all along the illimitable inane,
Fly on to clash together again, and make
Another and another frame of things
Forever. (36-43)

Lucretius then experiences one of the consequences of the loss of philosophical authority which Arnold refused to acknowledge. When reason yields to the power of dreams, the gods are no longer easily domesticated into an ordered cosmos or symbolic extensions of redeemed imaginative perception. The numinous powers of the gods reemerge as daimonic unconscious forces. Although he had "proved" that the gods do not exist, Lucretius learns the limits of rational arguments and encounters the Dionysiac forces repressed by philosophy, or so Nietzsche would soon argue. Yet this release provokes concluding ironies in the poem perhaps deeper than any Nietzsche could see. Lucilla had intended her potion to provoke Lucretius' desire for her, but his final fantasy is of a very different female image, "Passionless bride, divine tranquility" (265). Just as reason is negated by mad desire, desire turns on itself in quest of a final suicidal calm. If the course of confessional poetry can serve as analogue for Tennyson's vision here, only a radical suicidal silence can release one from the anxieties of interminable lyric self-expression.

V

When Tennyson works out a lyric strategy capable of resisting the ironies we have been observing, he does so paradoxically in *In Memoriam* where he assumes his most personal voice. I cannot here even approximate a complete reading of the poem, but I want to

indicate the ways it exemplifies means for overcoming the temptations of lyric self-expression. For this aspect of the poem's achievement is not sufficiently appreciated in itself or as a precursor of modernist attempts to develop forms reconciling lucidity with lyricism. In this poem Tennyson tests the possibility of moving from the cries of isolated lyric speakers to a condition of prayer, a condition earned by turning back in reflection on the source of those cries. By this reflection, Tennyson locates in loss a numinous shadow justifying a relation of the self to sources of value beyond the limits of empirical self or rational lucidity. In so doing, Tennyson faces squarely the need to locate principles of authority on assertions and images which do not depend upon rationality but provide a vision of ends to which one can then adapt rational means. Like Eliot, although with a sloppier theology (cf. SE, 292) Tennyson uses a logic dependent upon lyrical traditions to transcend the limits of lyric self-expression. By extending various lyric cries over time, *In Memoriam* can explore these expressions in order to meditate on the recurrent needs they are expressions of and the possible states of mind that might resolve the pain. The poem dramatizes a process of discovering in repeated cries the shadow of a deeper self or level of being one can ultimately try to reach in the equally irrational yet infinitely more composed mode of meditative prayer. Prayer tries to make present the spiritual source of the love which creates one's suffering within the contradictory demands imposed by ordinary empirical experiences.

The link between the cry and the obsessive solipsism of private expressions of grief is carefully established in the poem's "Prologue" where the poet's errors are summarized as "these wild and wandering cries/Confusions of a wasted youth" (40-41). The essence of these cries is then captured beautifully in one of the poem's darkest moments, where the effort to reason oneself out of despair suddenly collapses into uncontrollable emotion:⁸

Oh yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill...

⁸The poems of doubt in this second large section of *In Memoriam* are even darker than the original lyric cries of pain because, after the first Christmas interlude, Tennyson tries to bring his grief to a public conceptual level where it can be understood and interpreted. The failures of faith, then, are not simply personal but call into question the powers of the interpretive mind and received religious traditions.

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast rubbish to the void...

That not a worm is cloven in vain
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivelled in a fruitless fire...

Behold we know not anything
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream; but what am I?
An infant crying in the night;
An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry. (LIV)

Ideally, language can provide interpretive structures for disturbing facts that give us ways for acting in relation to them. But here the movement goes the other way, making language and the adult order it represents seem mere evasions of an insoluble and almost inexpressible private need (see SE, 290). The poem opens with an abstract statement of grounds for hope and then tries to catalogue some of the concrete evils this abstraction can interpret. But the increasing concreteness of these particulars (from "nothing" to "one life" to worm and moth) makes the abstraction itself problematic and returns us to an essentially uninterpretable lack of moral order. Thus, as in "Lucretius," the mind begins to stumble—it progresses from an admission of failed knowledge, to an assertion of hope that is distanced and made a cliché almost as soon as it is uttered, back to the isolated and helpless self-consciousness of the last stanza. The deconstruction of abstract thought and hope becomes also a deconstruction of language itself and of mature personality, leaving only pure unrelieved and unrelievable self-consciousness of a regressive state of need.

Tennyson's motto for the repeated failure of the early poems in his sequence to find an adequate language for grief might be the lyricist's version of Descartes: "I suffer, therefore I am." Yet the repetition of these cries in various contexts prepares a context in which the all consuming immediacy of lyric emotion may be overcome. As the poems construct patterns for the expression of grief, they project a spatial form in which temporal flux provides abstract symbolic materials for reflection, materials offering a glimpse of

the substantial or deep self expressing its pain. Tennyson's figure for these glimpses is the shadow, a metaphor crucial in modern poetry. The shadow delineates the effects of absence and loss, but it also serves to suggest the presence of spiritual forces not immediately accessible to single empirical expressions of suffering. For the shadow is precisely the sign for Tennyson of what Enlightenment lucidity cannot explain. In meditating on it, the poet's attention is drawn to another order, to a source of light revealed only by one's awareness of what blocks its immediate disclosures. Grief, in other words, serves as an absence of light which points by its absence both to a source and to a structure blocking the light from direct access to the empirical world:

Her [the poem's] care is not to part and prove;
 She takes, when harsher moods remit,
 What slender shade of doubt may flit,
 And makes it vassal unto love (XLVIII, 942-45; cf also XXX)

The shadow of grief for Hallam becomes the means for grasping a love one shares with Hallam's spiritual existence and opens the way to recognize the original source of love, the blinding light of Christ: "And by the measure of my grief/I leave thy greatness to be guessed" (1397-98).⁹

This theme, of course, does little for the sceptic in us except to show how easily faith can be made out of nostalgia. But both the logic informing Tennyson's affirmation (albeit in more secular forms, or in Eliot, more ascetic doctrinal ones) and the images of the poetic imagination it breeds are crucial to understanding modernism. The basic conflict of the poem is one that recurs in myriad later forms, usually in epistemological or psychological guises. Tennyson constructs *In Memoriam* as the struggle between two competing systems of explanation, each with its own principles of authority. The rational scientific system is seen as capable of handling empirical facts, but not the ways they are synthesized with one another or the psychological reactions of human agents to those facts. A spiritual system, on the other hand, does not have clear terms for its origins or for the relationship between its principles and natural facts, but it is broad and deep enough to interpret and give meaning to men's most profound experience. The first is consistent but incomplete,

⁹ The concepts associated with the shadow also apply to Tennyson's use of dreams, where light comes in darkness. See poems LXVII-LXXXVII.

the second irrational and, to secular minds, fragmentary, but its fragments are capable of signifying symbolically a totally satisfying order (cf. 16-24 for Tennyson's most succinct summary in terms involving the shadow image). Poetically the important feature of the two systems is the different ways they lead the imagination to function. They create the distinction between metonymic and metaphoric perspectives on language. I have elaborated this distinction elsewhere and want here only to show how deeply it permeates Victorian poetics and sets the terms for a good deal of modernist writing. We might say briefly that a metonymic view of language dramatizes the spirit dying into fragmented facts as the writer images the concrete world refusing to satisfy his desires for wholeness and for an objective parallel to his psychic moods. Here the deeper one's desire for objective correlates to values, the more mocking becomes the absence of symbolic depth in the particulars one fixes upon. A metaphoric world, on the other hand, is essentially incarnational (and hence we see poets like Ransom, Tate, and the early Lowell becoming Christians because of what they see as metaphysically demonstrated by poetry). Here concrete details remain specific and also function symbolically to warrant a sense of the presence of spiritual systems not empirically testable. Here from Mallarmé, to Yeats, to Eliot to Robert Bly, shadows have substance and decreasing the empirical order becomes a means for achieving spiritual wisdom and recovering ideal origins.

Tennyson articulates this contrast most clearly in two poems on returning to Hallam's house—one ending in a cry, the other in a kind of prayer. The first dark house poem requires little analysis because it is often singled out for attention by admirers of Tennyson.¹⁰ I want only to point out how its structure manifests a metonymic movement by reversing the Romantic dialectic of "here" and "not here," or, more abstractly, the relationship between presence and absence:

¹⁰ The best reading I know, of this and of most Tennyson poems, is Christopher Ricks' in *Tennyson* (New York: Macmillan, 1972). He also notes the parallels in tone between "Ulysses" and "The Lotus-Eaters" which I developed above. I should add that I hope my readings here help counter the charges of one non-admirer of Tennyson's syntax, Hugh Kenner, in "Some Post-Symbolist Structures," in Frank Brady, John Palmer, and Martin Price, eds., *Literary Theory and Structure* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1973), p. 390.

Dark house, by which once more I stand
 Here, in the long unlovely street,
 Doors, where my heart was used to beat
 So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasped no more.
 Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
 And like a guilty thing I creep
 At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away
 The noise of life begins again
 And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain
 On the bald street breaks the blank day. (VII)

The first stanza attempts to make an external object symbolize a full human presence and hence is dominated by references to the self and verbs expressing active human states of memory and expectation. Subsequent stanzas, however, progressively turn the house into a mausoleum and reduce the self and language to merely passive registers of empirical facts. The initial negative realization forces the self to become the object of thought and soon produces the lovely contradiction of "like a guilty thing, I creep." On the one hand frustrated desire reduces the speaker to non-personal terms, animate and inanimate, while on the other, the human anxiety of guilt makes an objective description of the scene completely inadequate. Not even the speaker can understand his guilt; he can only register the ironic leap from all too human a psychic state to an image of oneself reduced to inhuman functions. Then the last stanza makes a summary, abstract realization of total absence that produces a state where all personal verbs and psychological terms are banished. Here even the most conventional metaphors of renewal like the dawn produce only death in life, or dawn is solely a physical phenomenon without psychological analogues. And the final line uses the self-referential tautness of its alliteration to capture the total closure and self-completeness of a landscape alien to human desires.

Once Tennyson's extended reflection on loss and shadows leads to an acceptance of a spiritual order, the structural movement of the poetry is changed. Now, immediately after a poem celebrating a spiritual understanding of Hallam's death, the speaker returns to the dark house and to the dialectics of Romantic poetry:

Doors, where my heart was used to beat
 So quickly, not as one that weeps

I come once more; the city sleeps;
 I smell the meadow in the street;
 I hear a chirp of birds; I see
 Betwixt the black fronts long withdrawn
 A light-blue lane of early dawn,
 And think of early days and thee,
 And bless thee, for thy lips are bland,
 And bright the friendship of thine eye
 And in my thoughts, with scarce a sigh
 I take the pressure of thine hand. (CXIX)

The specific parallels with the earlier poem need no comment, except perhaps to point out how the opening negation here is a rejection of pain and a return to the past now comprehended on another level. The important thing is the structure. Here there are two dominant syntactic features of the poem's movement. First it builds to a series of paratactic "and" clauses which have the effect of projecting a progressive plenitude: every aspect of the scene, we are led to think, can elicit joyful satisfying responses. And second, the poem moves through a developing series of first-person active verbs as the speaker's involvement in the house expands into symbolic levels of meaning. The verbs register an ascending order of degrees of presence, a kind of winding stair without purgatorial torment. They move from physical motion, through a hierarchy of sensual reveries of the place, to memory producing a full affirmation of the present in the high Romantic act of blessing. Then the poem climaxes the expansion outward into mental space by blending specific thoughts of Hallam with a physical sense of his presence as a tutelary spirit.

Poem CVII, the last poem on Hallam's birthday, had been the appropriate place to register the spiritual meaning of birthdays, to see that a renewed consciousness can redeem the time and see all time as potentially "here" through the incarnation of the Word in the flesh. Now cries themselves become ways to that incarnational presence, and in recovering their origins (2635-36), the poet can see his anguish as a kind of prayer putting him in the presence of an eternal spiritual voice:

I have thee still, and I rejoice;
 I prosper, circled with thy voice;
 I shall not lose thee tho' I die. (CXXX, 2738-40)

VI

The modernist poet is similarly circled by these Victorian voices, at once reminders of the failures of specific spiritual projects and spurs to new experiments in irony. The crucial question he faces is how much he must lose and how much preserve in order to keep from dying. The closer we parallel Victorian problems and modernist poetics, the more we challenge any easy thematic definition of modernism. Yet we also establish fresh possibilities for describing its distinctive achievements in making articulate and self-conscious the problematic terms of its inheritance and in developing fresh styles and lyric strategies for encountering these problems.

The most obvious, and probably most widespread and enduring result of Victorian poets is the need to invent new ways of conceptualizing the nature of personality and personal expression, especially in relation to problems of lyric voice and lyric structure. In the context of these Victorian poems, Eliot's famous statement, "Only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things" (SE, 11), becomes a good deal more than symptomatic evasion by a disturbed melancholic. Similarly we understand some of the pressures on Yeats and Stevens to split the self into self-conscious roles and to seek metaphysical grounds for personal expression. And we likewise appreciate the impulse in objectivist and even surreal poetics, from Williams to Creeley and Ashbery, to define the self in terms of its contexts or its possible voices. As Confessional poetry would once more show, the equation of personal expression and lyric intensity purchases lyric emotion at the cost of melodramatic poses and extreme emotional states which undermine the possible authority of the poetic imagination. This plight, in turn, requires in reaction the attempt to make suffice a self diffused into selves, roles, and varied modes of attention.

The corollary to reconsidering the status of the self is a sustained poetic questioning of the gulf between rational lucidity and lyric emotion. Eliot's attack on "dissociated sensibility" was not merely a strategy for posing some fictional age of cultural unity. It was also precise commentary on the ways the feelings in Victorian dramatizations of self-expression distort and blur the powers of analytic thought. Feelings seemed so immediate and overpowering they allowed the mind either no distance or too much distance from the intensities of the speaker's affective states. When only the sensibility seems valid ground for lyric expression, distance from

one's feelings is imagined only as disruptive self-consciousness. The modernist reaction was (in perhaps an equally problematic way) to challenge, not to evade, the terms established as criteria for rational lucidity so that distance from feelings might become dialectical means for constructing imaginative ideals of truth and impersonal personality. Poetry could only become serious discourse if it could somehow remain faithful to an empirical metonymic order without becoming trapped in its own despair over that condition. It could no longer compensate for absence with the fustian of heroic grief and would have to begin the difficult task of either making metonymy itself valuable (as in Williams and some of Pound) or of finding defensible versions of a mediating word capable of projecting a metaphoric order of relationships into the flux of experience. And while the best experimental work of post-modern poets like Creeley and Ashbery rejects the dream of a dialectical fusion of lyric and rational, it replaces that dream by even harsher, more complex modes for resisting easy lyric postures and the cheap profundity of desperate emotions.

The odd irony here is that *In Memoriam* can still serve as example of the ways poets have chosen to engage lyrically in reflecting on the limitations of single lyric epiphanies. Tennyson saw that however powerful particular concrete moments of intense feeling might be, they are not sufficient defense against empirical forms of lucidity which dismiss feelings as momentary and as of only psychological significance. The modern poet who wants to resist this kind of attack must find ways of illustrating the symbolic orders, spaces of mind, or aspects of human nature which are revealed through lyric expression, and thus he must explore ways of patterning his epiphanic moments so that their recurrent and essential features might be seen as elements any lucid philosophy must take into account.¹¹ Moreover,

¹¹ Lyric poems intensify both the saying and the showing aspects of discourse. Many modern experiments can be seen as attempts to give philosophical insight to overlapping aspects of what specific poems only intimate. Thus some poets try to unify their volumes, so that the lyric moments reinforce one another and invite an analysis of the grounds of their interrelationships. Others, like Yeats and Stevens invent prose forms somewhere between expression and analytic philosophy to deepen the context of their lyric work. This need for pattern gives us another way to interpret what Edward Said, *Beginnings* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), calls a distinctively modern concern with a writer's literary career. From my perspective, the sense of career is less the result of a concern for beginnings and the problematic

Tennyson makes highly self-conscious the need to develop those patterns in non-discursive ways that require a spatial form including and interpreting temporal movements (see especially XLVIII). Patterns of repetition and juxtaposition are required—not to transcend time, at least as the aesthetic tradition interprets that process, but to redeem time, to enable us to give substance to the shadows which are entrances to our deepest selves. The combination of lyrics forces the reader to dwell in the poem's shadows, in what is never literally present but always pointing beyond itself to some ideal order among the fragments of our emotional lives. In Hallam's death we might say (in a critical parody of Christian metaphoric logic) is the birth of Symbolism and the beginning of a modernist form of spiritual adventure.

Behind these dilemmas about self and lyric emotions lies the more general problem of establishing forms of authority and images of admirable human actions not reducible to the contingencies of authenticity, social morality, or even Tennyson's personalized theology. This leads, on the one hand, to various versions of the Symbolist attempt to develop visions of imagination and mind that are at once expressive and constitutive of an ideal order, that create a higher mode of lucid thought. On the other hand, it impels writers more sceptical of the Romantic tradition to explore an objectivist sense of permanence constituted by the mind's powers to fix in art qualitative aspects of perceptual experience. In either case, authority would depend on making explicit and fully self-conscious the historical forces creating the problems the Victorian poets could express but not fully understand, at least in conceptual terms.

With this insistence on self-consciousness comes a hardening of certain kinds of aesthetic standards that have made it difficult to read Victorian poetry properly. In reaction against the wavering, unstable voices of Victorian self-expression and loose lyrical thinking, there arose an emphasis on the necessity of the self-conscious writer to master and interpret the forces he finds seeking expression. However difficult his verse would have to become, the modernist poet

authority for writing than a way of contextualizing and giving resonance to lyric epiphanies. This is perhaps clearest in Eliot's using echoes of his earlier desperation as one context for interpreting the release he experiences in the meditative prayers of the *Four Quartets*. I should add, finally, that I follow up these speculations on modern and contemporary strategies for resisting easy lyric postures in "Placing Creeley's Recent Work: A Poetics of Conjecture," forthcoming in *Boundary 2*.

could only transcend what the Victorians had shown to be a nightmare of modern history by seeking to determine, in aesthetic form and self-reflexive interpretation, all those forces which might otherwise determine him. If the poetic imagination was to claim authority over a narrow model of lucid reasoning, the poem must give at least the appearance that it allowed no loose edges or symptomatic signs of uninterpretable tensions. The implicit author of the poem must seem master of all its vagaries, even if mastery could only appear in the form of deliberate juxtaposition or, in Stevens, of freedom from the need to impose structures on what the mind continually constructs. Modernist poetry, we might say, chose Logos over Pathos, a choice which recent poets have come to insist was a terrible confinement of the imagination, indeed was itself a symptomatic defensiveness. Whether aesthetic expression can or should master the conditions revealed in the expression is a difficult theoretical question not answerable here. All I can do is suggest that Pathos too has a crucial role in aesthetic experience: the deeply moving features of the best Victorian poems derive in large part from our identifying with the poet's problems as he creates expressive structures which never quite comprehend all they reveal. This condition, if not the styles of defining it, remains, despite the efforts of modernist poets, the central feature of the modern sensibility. It may be the best justification for our fascination with the authority of inadequate authorities—that is, with poetry.

*"And Speketh so Pleyn":
The Clerk's Tale and its Teller*

Not many *Canterbury Tales* disturb Chaucer's readers as much as the Clerk's. Long ago, Lounsbury, a spokesman for many, said the Tale's "central idea" was "too revolting for any skill in description to make it palatable."¹ Yet the suffering Griselda and the contemptible Walter must have had some appeal, for the fourteenth century's greatest poets, Boccaccio, Petrarch and Chaucer, were each sufficiently attracted to try his hand at describing their marital travails. The tale, in fact, has been repeatedly retold since Boccaccio ended the *Decameron* with it, but no telling, certainly not Boccaccio's or Petrarch's, has evoked as vitriolic a response as has Chaucer's.² Readers of some versions even praise the tale. One suspects, then, that the way the tale is told, perhaps more than its "central idea," accounts for the reader's reaction to it.

In Chaucer, the trials of Griselda and Walter are told by the Clerk, and it is his telling, I think, that has divided the critics so passionately. The Clerk, of course, recites a story he learned from

* Warren Ginsberg is an Assistant Professor of English at Yale University. He has published articles on Cynewulf and Chaucer.

¹ Thomas R. Lounsbury, *Studies in Chaucer* (New York: Harper, 1892), p. 340. Scholarship on the "Clerk's Tale" is vast; the following studies proved particularly helpful: J. V. Cunningham, "Ideal Fiction: The Clerk's Tale," *Shenandoah*, 19 (Winter 1968), 38-41; E. Talbot Donaldson, *Chaucer's Poetry: An Anthology for the Modern Reader* (New York: Ronald Press 1958), p. 918 ff; Joseph Grennen, "Science and Sensibility in Chaucer's Clerk," *ChauR*, 6 (1971), 81-93; Robert Jordan, *Chaucer and the Shape of Creation* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 198-207; John McNamara, "Chaucer's Use of the Epistle of St. James in the Clerk's Tale," *ChauR*, 7 (1973), 184-93; Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1969), pp. 190-97; Elizabeth Salter, *Chaucer: The Knight's Tale and the Clerk's Tale*, *Barron's Studies in English Literature*, V, *Barron's Educational Series*, (New York, 1962); James Sledd, "The Clerk's Tale: The Monsters and the Critics," *MP*, 51 (1953), 73-82.

² For the origins and subsequent history of the Griselda legend, see Francis L. Utley and W. E. Bettridge, "New Light on the Origin of the Griselda Story," *TSSL*, 13 (1971), 153-208.

"Fraunceys Petrak." Since the texts of Petrarch's letters, and an anonymous French redaction Chaucer used, have been established by Severs, we can consider not only the merits of the narratives of Chaucer's direct sources, but can appraise closely the making of the "Clerk's Tale" as well. In doing this, the religious premises of Petrarch's recounting emerge, setting his telling entirely apart from its predecessor in Boccaccio. And when one examines the changes Chaucer made in his version, a design that combines secular and religious details begins to appear, a design that ultimately affords us a glimpse of Chaucer forming a character.

The earliest extant literary accounts of Griseida and Walter are found in the *Decameron* and the *Epistolae Seniles*; the tone and purpose of Petrarch's story, however, differ markedly from Boccaccio's. Gone are Dioneo's cynicism and irony;³ in their place, the decorous and stylized words of Griselda and Walter have properly dignified the tale for its conversion into a religious exemplum. The moral Petrarch appends explicitly states that the intent of his tale is religious:

I thought to repeat this story now in a different style not so much that women today should imitate the patience of this wife, which seems to me hardly imitable, but that I may at least move my readers to imitate the constancy of Griselda; that since she was so faithful to her husband, we may venture to be so steadfast to our Lord, who, as James the Apostle says, may not be tempted with evil and would tempt no man. Yet he allows us to be vexed with many and sobering scourges, not that He may know our spirit, which He knew before we were begotten, but that our frailties might be made known to us through known and familiar signs. I would definitely include on a list of constant men whomsoever he was who suffered without murmur for his God what this rustic wife suffered for her mortal husband.⁴

³ The purpose and effect of the last tale in the *Decameron* has been debated for years. What follows is only the most cursory examination of Boccaccio's tale, seen chiefly in its relation to Petrarch's letter. I shall enter the fray more fully in a subsequent article.

⁴ I translate from J. Burke Severs, "The Clerk's Tale," in *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, eds. W. F. Bryan and G. Dempster (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1941), 288-331. All subsequent translations from Petrarch are mine.

This is a far cry from the lesson Dioneo draws from his story:

What can one say, except that celestial spirits rain down from heaven on the houses of the poor, as well as on the royal palaces of those who were better suited to watch swine than to rule men. Who but Griselda could have suffered not only without a tear but happily the cruel and unheard of tests Walter devised. For perhaps it would have served him right if he had come up against a wife who, when driven from the house in her shift, would have found someone else to shake her skin-coat for her, gaining for herself a pretty dress in the process.⁵

One sees that the tone and focus of the two tales are different. Since he means his account to have significance for the everyday world, an often meaningless world of disease and destruction, to which he will soon return, Dioneo constantly draws his audience's attention to Walter. Before he begins the tale, Dioneo says:

Sweet and gentle ladies, this day has been devoted, so far as I can tell, to the doings of kings and sultans and people of that sort; and therefore, so as not to place too great a distance between us, I want to tell you of a marquis....

In his typically nihilistic way, Dioneo then immediately advises no one to imitate Walter. Indeed, neither Walter nor Griselda is allowed any moral stature: Dioneo's distaste for Griselda is obvious in the sour criticism of his conclusion; Walter's actions, which perhaps are not at too great a distance from the experience and knowledge of his listeners, are characterized as *matta bestialità*, as senseless cruelty. The woman is a mindless victim, while the marquis becomes a jaundiced reminder of a fallen world.

In contrast, Petrarch enjoins us to consider Griselda, for in her lies the moral and spiritual center of the story. The lines in the epilogue "not so much that women today should imitate the patience of this wife, which seems to me hardly imitable," stress the religious function of the tale and remove its events, as Elizabeth Salter says, "from the danger of too close a secular application."⁸ We should

⁵ My text is Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, a cura di V. Branca (Firenze, 1960). Here and throughout, I have altered, sometimes substantially, the translation of J. H. McWilliam, Boccaccio, *The Decameron* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1972) to make the rendering more literal and accurate.

⁸ Salter, *Clerk's Tale*, p. 38.

not imitate the patience Grieselda exhibits under torment; it is the constancy of her faith that is to be commended. As faithful as she was to Walter, a mortal man, so should we be to God.

In its secular setting, however, the tale becomes difficult. Walter's unanswerable testing of Griselda is no doubt hard to reconcile with conjugal, not to mention spiritual, love. But Petrarch hints throughout his story that not only does divine purpose inform Walter's actions, though he himself may be unconscious of it, but that Griselda's actions imitate Christ's. Walter's first speech, for instance, contains overt religious references, and has none of the prying cynicism and harshness of the speech in Boccaccio:

Whatever good there is in man proceeds from God alone.
I entrust my station and the fate of my marriage to Him,
hoping for his accustomed mercy.⁷

And throughout the tale, whenever possible, Petrarch deflects our growing abhorrence away from Walter and on to some other character. When Walter's henchman comes to take Griselda's daughter, Petrarch says:

Report of this man was suspicious, his face suspect; suspect
also the hour of his coming and suspect his speech.

In short, a real villain, and as such a surrogate for our censure of Walter. In Boccaccio, the man is little more than a cipher; he is simply said to come looking "very sorrowful."

In Petrarch's version, Walter is clearly an agent; when he is criticized, the criticism is muted. Before he marries Griselda, Walter is faulted for being "most careless of the future," "*incuriosissimus futurorum erat*." When he finally is done testing Griselda, Walter justifies his actions by saying his subjects must know that

⁷ Compare this with the contemptuous cynicism of the corresponding passage in Boccaccio:

My friends, you constrain me to do what above all else I had decided never to do, considering how hard it is to find someone whose customs well match one's own, and how many thousands there are whose are just the opposite, and how hard life is for the man who comes up against a woman ill-suited to him. And to say you believe you will be able to know the manners of the daughters from those of their mothers and fathers...is ridiculous. For I don't know how you are to know the fathers, nor how you can know the secrets of the mothers; and even if you did, daughters very often are different from either parent.

he is "*curiosum atque experientem*." He means, I take it, "caring, and active in proving it"; by this point, however, we are likely to understand the words as "meddlesome (if not worse), and an expert taskmaster at it." Considering the repugnance with which Augustine viewed "*mala curiositas*" in the *Confessions*, some circuitous disparagement is being levelled at Walter.⁸ As incurious before as he is curious now, in either case he earns little praise.

As for Griselda, consider (in Latin) the geographical prooemium Petrarch added when he translated the tale:

Est ad Ytalie latus occidum Vesullus ex Apenini iugis mons unus altissimus, qui, vertice nubila superans, liquido sese ingerit etheri, mons suapte nobilis natura, Padi ortu nobilissimus, qui eius e latere fonte lapsus exiguo, orientem contra solem fertur, mirisque mox tumidus incrementis brevi spacio decurso, non tantum maximorum unus amnium sed fluviorum a Virgilio rex dictus, Liguriam gurgite violentus intersecat; dehinc Emiliam atque Flaminian Veneciampue distterminans multis ad ultimum et ingentibus hostijs in Adriaticum mare descendit.

(There stands in Italy, toward the Western side, Mount Viso, one of the highest of the Apennines, whose summit, surpassing the clouds, thrusts itself up into the pure ether. This mount, noble in its own right, is most noble as the source of the Po, which, issuing in a little spring from its side, flows eastward toward the rising sun. Descending in its course, it soon swells with great tributaries, so much that it is not only one of the greatest rivers, but is called the king of rivers by Virgil; it cuts Liguria violently with raging waters; then, bounding Emilia, Ferrara and Venice, it finally empties through many great mouths into the Adriatic Sea).

Certainly the order and harmony of the natural world established here may be contrasted with the disorder and chaos in the human sphere that follows, but beyond that, Petrarch in effect recounts the moral of his entire story in a paragraph. Issuing in a small spring from the side of a noble mountain, the Po grows to be the "king of rivers." This action charts exactly Griselda's miraculous course

⁸ See Augustine, *Confessions*, Book X, ch. 35. Augustine, of course, was Petrarch's favorite Church Father, and Petrarch quotes him more often in his work than any other author save Cicero.

from poorest peasant to renowned marquis of Saluces, allowing for even the rough periods and agitation (*gurgite violentus*) she had to endure.⁹ It recapitulates as well an important and relevant theme from the Epistle of James: "Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation" (1: 9), and again, "Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith? Is it not the rich who oppress you...?" (2: 5-6). As we have seen, Petrarch quotes James in his epilogue: God does not tempt us but allows us to be tested. Petrarch has knit up what Chaucer would call the "sentence," the moral significance of his tale, with considerable art.

The small spring that becomes the mighty Po is "*fonte...exiguo*." *Fons*, even in classical Latin, could mean "well"; Chaucer translated it thus, catching at the same time the further denotation of "source." When Walter comes to marry Griselda, he meets her just as she is returning carrying water from a distant well (*e longinquo fonte*), a detail Petrarch added to Boccaccio. We remember the fledgling Po and are meant, I think, to associate the two. *Exiguus*, of course, denotes "poor," "scanty," as well as "small": in medieval Latin, it also carried moral overtones of "humility."¹⁰ It is a fine word to describe Griselda.

Moreover, the very act of the Po issuing (*lapsus*, itself a word overflowing with Christian connotations) from the side (*latere*) of the most noble Mount Viso, recalls not only the blood and water that issued from Christ's (*latus*) at the Crucifixion, but the river of life (*fluvium aquae vivae*) John saw coming from the throne of God and the Lamb in *Revelations* (22: 1). At the very beginning of Petrarch's tale, we are reminded of Christ's suffering, so that Griselda's trials, and her rewards, might be seen in their proper perspective, as an *imitatio Christi*.

In the Griselda legend, then, Petrarch found a worthy but slightly flawed story whose *sentence* was almost consonant with Christian ethics. When the story's *sentence* was translated into its Christian *moralitas*, and Griselda's constant love for Walter became a model for man's faith in God, the spirit of the story became like that of the Book of Job (5: 17-18):

⁹ According to Lewis and Short, *gurgies*, besides meaning "raging waters," "whirlpool," also carried connotations of "insatiable craving," a human trait that well describes Walter.

¹⁰ DuCange, *Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis*, sv. *Exiguus*.

Happy is the man whom God corrects: therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty. For he makes sore and binds up, he wounds and his hands make whole.

Within the allegory Walter's impossible testings remain, but are unregarded in the purer light of Griselda's virtuous suffering.

In his dedicatory letter to Boccaccio, Petrarch said that he had greatly admired the story of Griselda all his life; one wonders why he waited until the end of his life to tell it. Yet the emotions Petrarch's tale enshrines strongly resemble those celebrated in the *Canzoniere*. The same steadfastness of purpose, the same single-mindedness of desire, the same intensity of devotion that distinguishes Petrarch's love for Laura are present in this tale; here, however, the end is Christian. In many ways, his tale of Griselda is Petrarch's final gloss on the *Canzoniere*.

When we turn to Chaucer's rendering, however, many problems confront us. The "Clerk's Tale," it seems, is constantly pulled in two directions, one human, the other divine, to the point that many feel that the "human sympathies so powerfully evoked by the sight of unmerited suffering form, ultimately, a barrier to total acceptance of the work in its original (religious) function."¹¹ Now Chaucer followed Petrarch's narrative nearly to the letter, neither deleting any of the scenes, nor changing the sequence Petrarch had given them. That Chaucer translated Petrarch's moral as well indicates that Chaucer knew the spirit of Petrarch's version as well as the letter. Yet in the "Clerk's Tale" there are introduced at once realistic, sentimental and religious attitudes that now direct our attention to the moral purpose of the story and now distract us from it. And although it was Chaucer who made these additions, it is the Clerk he makes responsible for them.

Before the Clerk begins his recital, he tells us that Petrarch wrote a "prohemye" to his tale, which, to the Clerk's judgment, is a long and impertinent thing:

But forth to tellen of this worthy man
That taughte me this tale, as I bigan,
I seye that first with heigh stile he enditeth,
Er he the body of his tale writeth,
a prohemye, in the which discryveth he
Pemond, and of Saluces the contree,
And speketh of Apennyn, the hilles hye,

¹¹ Salter, *Clerk's Tale*, p. 50.

That been the boundes of West Lumbardye,
 And of Mount Vesulus in special,
 Where as the Poo out of a welle smal
 Taketh his firste spryngyng and his sours,
 That estward ay encresseth in his cours
 To Emele-ward, to Ferrare, and Venyse;
 The which a long thyng were to devyse.
 And trewely, as to my juggement,
 Me thynketh it a thyng impertinent,
 Save that he wole conveyen his mateere....
 (E. 39-55)¹²

The Clerk is here making use of the figure *occupatio*: he tells us all the superfluous facts and then dismisses them as unimportant. As a man who "nought o word spak moore than was neede" (A. 304), we might expect the Clerk to edit his material in such a way. Yet in using this figure, our student explains in nineteen lines of poetry why he is not repeating fifteen lines of prose; rehearsing nearly everything Petrarch says, the Clerk adds to the verbiage rather than reduces it. Furthermore, the Clerk's use of the *occupatio* is premature, to say the least; not knowing at this point what Petrarch's *mateere* is, we are cajoled into accepting the Clerk's arbitrary judgment as authoritative. Yet considering the prooemium, one wonders just how it is impertinent. Impertinent perhaps to the narrative matter of the tale, the prooemium is beyond doubt germane to the tale's *sentence*.

The lines under consideration serve a double purpose: they identify the Clerk as the narrator of the tale, and they make it clear that, since clerks were practiced exegetes as well as rhetoricians, our narrator might not balk at emending his text where he sees fit. Yet when he fails to see Petrarch's meaning, the Clerk's rhetoric miscarries; in his effort to speak to the point, the Clerk misses it, and the judgment and the perception of this narrator are unavoidably called into question.

In interpreting his *mateere*, the Clerk enters his narration at three points to register complaint against Walter: first at v. 460,

But as for me, I seye that yvele it sit
 To assaye a wyf whan that it is no nede,
 And putten hire in angwyssh and in drede.

¹² My quotations are from *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd. ed., ed. F. N. Robinson (Cambridge, Mass: Houghton Mifflin, 1957); hereafter all citations are given their group letter and line number within the text.

Again at v. 621,

O nedeles was she tempted in assay!
But wedded men ne knowe no mesure,
Whan that they fynde a pacient creature.

And again at v. 696,

But now of wommen wolde I axen fayn
If thise assayes myghte nat suffise?
What koude a sturdy housbounde moore devyse
To preeve hir wyfhod and hir stedefastnesse,
And he continuyng evere in sturdinesse?

Surely the Clerk's moral righteousness prompts these rhetorical asides. Yet the effect of these lines is unsettling. Whatever his intention, by questioning Walter's behavior the Clerk demonstrates his failure to understand that the very nature of Griselda's forbearance puts Walter's actions beyond objection. What Petrarch commends Griselda for not saying, for not even thinking, the Clerk here says time and again.¹³ Furthermore, the Clerk has chosen the wrong subject to comment on. By directing his complaints against Walter, the Clerk evokes sympathy for Griselda's plight. We are reminded of Walter's cruelty, of his needlessly tempting his poor wife, whose virtue was already proved. It is Griselda's constant faithfulness, though, and not the circumstances that prove it, that Petrarch commends to us and which warrant our consideration; Griselda deserves our attention and our praise, not our sympathy. By commenting on Walter's actions, the Clerk has not only unjustifiably involved us with the tale's chaff, but seems himself to have lost sight of its wheat, Griselda's constancy. Our commentator has confused us rather than enlightened us.

Distracting too are Griselda's only disrespectful words to Walter, coming on her expulsion from his castle:

O goode God! how gentil and how kynde
Ye semed by youre speche and youre visage
The day that maketh was oure mariage!
(E. 852-854)

¹³ Particularly interesting is the rhetorical form of the last of these asides. This is nothing less than a *demande d'amour*: compare, for instance, the "Knight's Tale," 1347-48:

Yow lovers axe I now this questioun
Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamoun?

Although tempered somewhat by the following stanza, these lines are nonetheless disconcerting when we remember the consequences of the lady's constancy:

"I have," quod she, "seyd thus, and evere shal:
 I wol no thyng, ne nyl no thyng, certayn,
 But as you list. *Naught greveth me at al,*
Though that my doughter and my sone be slayn,—
At youre comandement, this is to seyn.
 I have noght had no part of children tweyne
 But first siknesse, and after, wo and peyne."
 (E. 645-651)

Compare this passage with Griselda's speech in Petrarch:

Griselda replied: "I have said, and I say again, that I can want nothing nor not want anything except what you wish; nor do I truthfully have any claim to these children past the bearing of them..."

Dignified, constant to itself and beyond criticism in Petrarch, Griselda's re-affirmation in the "Clerk's Tale" seems to underline the tension between her suffering and her saintliness. The Latin "*neque vero in hijs filijs quicquam habeo preter laboreum*" seems decidedly flat besides the description of Griselda's morning sickness and her birth pangs, but this is just the point. A saint's life is marked by the absence of details which express merely human suffering; this tale is not.

Furthermore, the additional sentence changes the tenor of passage, for by the Clerk's rendering Griselda's constancy has seemingly been made to justify Walter's murders, while in Petrarch's tale, her constancy justifies only itself. Knowing that Walter has not murdered his children makes Griselda's speech ironic for the reader of the Clerk's tale, and praiseworthy for Petrarch's. The Clerk has made Griselda at once a symbol of ever-constant fortitude proved by the greatest duress, and a mother who suffers undeserved cruelty, and the one can only work at cross-purposes to the other. Indeed, when Griselda later expresses her disapprobation of Walter (E. 852 ff., discussed above), this single inconsistency not only makes her functioning as a symbol difficult, but also raises questions of her concern as a mother. To "*grucche*" at Walter's "*lust*" now and not when her children were to be slain seems mistimed, at best. And as we might expect, Griselda's unfortunate demurrer is the Clerk's addition.

Griselda's swooning is similarly the Clerk's invention. The four

lines in Petrarch which describe Griselda's joy at her reunion with her children are heartfelt and direct:

When Griselda hears this she rushes inanimate with joy and out of her senses with piety and most joyful tears to the embraces of her children, and tires them with kisses and weeps softly with a loving sigh.

This is all Petrarch says. The Clerk, on the other hand, waxes ecstatic through five stanzas (E. 1097-1113), so ecstatic that Griselda swoons twice. Robert Jordan is right in claiming that this scene engages our deepest sympathy, for as the Clerk himself says, "O which a pitous thyng it was to se/Hir swownyng, and hire humble voys to heere" (E. 1086-1087).¹⁴ Pity in fact colors the entire passage, as the Clerk uses the word again and again (E. 1080, 1082, 1086, 1104). Yet whereas Griselda is happy in Petrarch because she never despaired, because her faith and constancy precluded despair, the Clerk makes us feel that Griselda has suffered, even to the point of despair, and that her joy is so overwhelming because it springs from the depths of her long-anguished soul. In Petrarch, Griselda does not even speak; her joy is unalloyed, and the single sigh that escapes her mouth bespeaks her joy, which is beyond words. Griselda cries out in the "Clerk's Tale," however, and again her words are confused and unsettling:

O tendre, O deere, o yonge children myne!
 Youre woful mooder wende stedfastly
 That cruell houndes or som foul vermyne
 Hadde eten yow.... (E. 1093-1096)

Can any mother who steadfastly believes that cruel hounds or foul vermin had eaten her children be praised for the constancy of her thought? Yet Petrarch's moral, which follows posthaste, asks us to commend Griselda's constancy. In an utterly human situation, Griselda speaks not as a parent, but as a personification of devotion, and again her words seem out of place. One moment a saintly martyr to Walter's demands, an anguished mother for the Clerk's pity the next, Griselda is caught between the conflicting demands of two incompatible worlds.

These instances which unintentionally distract our attention from the tale's religious import are at the same time set in sharper contrast

¹⁴ Jordan, *Chaucer*, p. 201.

by additions that support a religious reading. As a man who "hadde gotten hym yet no benefice,/Ne was so wordly for to have office" (A. 291-292), the Clerk would embrace the religious intent of Petrarch's tale. In pious zeal the Clerk in fact outreaches Petrarch; God's name is invoked much more frequently, and the Clerk adds many descriptive details that have religious associations. Thus when Griselda's child is taken from her, she submits,

And as a lamb she sitteth meke and stille,
And leet this cruell sergeant doon his wille.
(E. 538-539)

Even before Griselda is mentioned, we are reminded of the Nativity:

But hye God somtyme senden kan
His grace into a litel oxes stalle....
(E. 206-207)

This image is repeated, first when Walter comes to marry Griselda (E. 290-292), and then to contrast her humble origins with her queenly deportment (E. 396-399). Besides depicting the lowliness of Griselda's birth, these lines spiritualize the peasant girl by associating her with Christ and with the Nativity. They convey the religious purpose of the tale, as indeed does the Clerk's passage which likens Griselda's humbleness to Job's:

Men speke of Job, and moost for his humblesse,
As clerkes, whan hem list, konne wel endite,
Namely of men, but as in soothfastnesse,
Though clerkes preise wommen but a lite,
Ther kan no man in humblesse hym acquite
As womman kan, ne kan been half so trewe
As wommen been, but it be falle of newe.
(E. 932-938)

Similarly, Walter's nobles bid him marry *for hye Goddes sake*, lest, *as God forbede*, he should die without an heir (E. 135-137), and Walter is said to live *In Goddes pees* for a while with Griselda (E. 423); when he reclaims Griselda, Walter again invokes God's mercy:

"Grisilde," quod he, "*by God, that for us deyde*,
Thou art my wyf, ne noon other I have,
Ne nevere hadde, *as God my soule save!*"
(E. 1062-1064)

Walter's references to God at this point and throughout the tale have usually been explained as helping to justify his behavior. As long as Walter may be identified as God's surrogate, his actions must be given our sanction, as they prove Griselda. The fact is, however, that Walter has been so vividly and adversely portrayed that, as Elizabeth Salter says, "we are inclined—indeed encouraged—to believe in his heartlessness rather than in his inscrutability."¹⁵ Indeed, as we have seen, the Clerk's own moral interjections and sentimental embellishments do the most to confuse matters. By the time Griselda is likened to Job, Walter is so much a man and a symbol of cruelty, that the reader is likely to complete the comparison and identify Walter with Satan, rather than with, say, the rich man who in the Epistle of St. James rejoices in his humiliation. One is never tempted to such speculation in Petrarch; in the "Clerk's Tale," however, it is hard to avoid.

One sees, then, that it is the Clerk's rendering of his tale that has upset Chaucer's readers so. One wishes the Clerk had followed Harry Baillie's advice and had spoken

...so pleyn at this tyme, we yow preye,
That we may understonde what ye seye.
(E. 19-20)

Yet one sees from his injudicious apostrophes and from his confusing appeals to the reader's sympathy that the Clerk himself does not fully understand the tale he tells. In fact, behind Harry Baillie's request for plain speech lies a revealing question concerning the place of rhetoric in religious writing that was much debated in Chaucer's time. Sermons in the fourteenth century, especially those given by friars, tended to be prolix and would often neglect their thought for the sake of rhetorical coloring; there arose in opposition a call for simple writing which everyone could understand. The chief spokesman of this movement in England was Wyclif; in his Latin *Sermones* he argues generally that eloquence of rhetorical ornament has no necessary place in theological wisdom. When it was a question of instructing common people in matters of salvation, however, Wyclif insisted plain, direct speech should be used, and "heroic declamation" must be avoided:

¹⁵ Salter, *Clerk's Tale*, p. 58.

Sed non dubium quia plana locucia de pertinentibus ad salutem sit huiusmodi, ideo illa est eligenda declamatione eroyca post-posita.¹⁶

So strongly did Wyclif feel, he instituted his order of poor preachers, many of whom were "symple men" who wandered about England proclaiming the Gospel in clear sermons Wyclif had written for them.¹⁷ Even if Harry Baillie could smell a Loller in the wind, he may have at least preferred their clarity to the interminable rambles of the orthodox.

As we have seen, the Clerk chooses or is made to ignore this advice, and introduces his tale (written, we must note, in rhyme-royal stanzas) with a rhetorical flourish that completely misses the mark. Thus it is fitting that when the Clerk does speak plainly, and that is in his Envoy, he is as much the butt of his satire and wit as is the Wife of Bath.

The Envoy has long been recognized as a mock encomium of the Wife, yet even Alice may smile when she hears the Clerk's council:

O noble wyves, ful of heigh prudence,
 Lat noon humylitee youre tonge naille,
 Ne lat no clerk have cause or diligence
 To write of yow a storie of swich mervalle
 As of Grisildis pacient and kynde,
 Lest Chichevache yow swelwe in hire entraille!
 (E. 1183-1188)

The Wife needn't loosen her tongue at all, for in his humility the Clerk has done the Wife's protesting for her. Walter, a man who would not be governed by his wife, is by the Clerk's own depiction despicable and abhorrent; in short, a monster. And Walter becomes

¹⁶ John Wycliffe, *Sermones*, ed. Iohannes Loserth (London, 1887-1890), IV, Sermon XXXI, p. 271. For a general survey of the controversy, see J. W. Atkins, *English Literary Criticism: The Medieval Phase* (Gloucester, Mass., 1961), pp. 143-162. The theme of simple and humble speech runs throughout the Middle Ages. See Erich Auerbach, "Sermo humilis," *Literary Language and its Public in Late Antiquity and in the Early Middle Ages* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965), pp. 27-66.

¹⁷ On Wyclif and the poor preachers see Edward Block, *John Wyclif: Radical Dissenter*, *Humanities Monograph Series*, I (San Diego: San Diego State College Press, 1962), 36-39; George Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe* (London, 1912; rpt. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1966), p. 177 et passim.

a monster only after he assumes *maistrye* over Griselda. A case in point, our Good Wife might say, of what happens, even to good men, when they and not their wives govern. The Clerk has once more failed to see his auctor's purpose, for Petrarch's tale deals not so much with marriage or with marital relations as with transcendent virtue. Yet the Envoy epitomizes those additions which all along have secularized Petrarch's tale, and thus it is a nice irony in the marriage debate that the Clerk's tale offers a more persuasive argument in behalf of the Wife of Bath than any experience she has related.

One wonders what purpose Chaucer had when he introduced such ambiguity into his tale. Changes within the body of the tale seem consistent with the character who speaks the prologue and the Envoy; in this, the "Clerk's Tale" may provide a glimpse into Chaucer's method of forming a character.

Manuscript evidence suggests that the tale of Griselda was written before Chaucer assigned it to any particular teller.¹⁸ Chaucer recognized, I am sure, that his additions to the tale made it more complex, if only by pulling the religious exemplum in an unexpected, human direction. In fact, the way Chaucer complicated Petrarch's fiction seems to me typical of him. Griselda becomes problematic when the unbending patience of a martyr is joined with a mother's distress over the consequences of her actions. This juxtaposition of absolute and temporal perspectives is perhaps the only thing Griselda shares with another Chaucerian heroine, Criseyde. Here, as many have noted, the unchangeable facts of history, which, alas, have branded Criseyde unfaithful and a whore, are hard to reconcile with our memory of a lovely woman's charm and mystery. In both stories, difficulties arise when the intentions Chaucer's characters give voice to are unimpeachable, but their subsequent actions are all too human. Chaucer's fiction is most ambiguous and disturbing when men and women are most naturally themselves.

In the *Troilus*, Chaucer managed to accommodate history and human nature in the figure of the narrator. When he decided to assign the story of Griselda to the Clerk, Chaucer, quite ironically, considering the Clerk's opinion of Griselda, again joined the conflicting traits of spiritual devotion and worldliness, and thereby created the character of his teller. In the Prologue, therefore, the

¹⁸ *The Text of the Canterbury Tales*, 6 vol., eds. J. Manly and E. Rickert (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1940), II, 244, 265, 500-501; III, 473.

Clerk is the meek, formal rhetorician of reverent bearing, a man who would compare Griselda to Job, and describe her with images of the Nativity. In the Envoy, on the other hand, an exuberant and witty human being appears, a young man who would object to Walter's cruelty, and who would use his tale as a secular rejoinder. The very sort of man who, in registering his moral indignation in the body of the tale, would cast the reprobation in the form of a *demande d'amour*:

But now of wommen wolde I axen fayn
If thise assayes myghte nat suffise?

The clash between these two contradicting traits produces a curious kind of double vision: the Clerk is both wordly and spiritual; he is neither wordly nor spiritual. Or in the more exact description in the General Prologue:

...he hadde gotten hym yet no benefice,
Ne was so wordly for to have office.
(A. 291-292)

He is nearly, in fact, a walking litotes:

And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,
But looked holwe, and thereto soberly.
(A. 288-289)

The Clerk, in sum, is *in transitu*; a young and eager man, in orders, who may become a preacher of note; a man who reveres learning and eloquence, sometimes at the expense of substance, who in time we hope will learn that clarity of expression is a virtue. Beneath a modest yet severe front, he hides desire enough to engage and experience the world. A complex man, our Clerk, whose plain speech and high style we may gladly hope to teach and understand.

The "Clerk's Tale," then, characterizes its teller, yet whatever uneasiness or uncertainty we feel reading the story is intimately connected with the Clerk himself. The basic ambiguity in the Clerk's characterization recapitulates the basic ambiguity in the tale he tells. In this, the "Clerk's Tale" might provide a paradigm for understanding Chaucer's increasingly sophisticated conception of character in the *Canterbury Tales*. Even as "the wordes moote be cosyn to the dede" (A. 742), so too did Chaucer feel a person's character is related to the kind of story he tells and the way he tells it. Now the idea of the 'Canterbury Tales' took shape when Chaucer decided

each story would be told by a pilgrim on the way to Canterbury Cathedral. Such a situation assumes at least two levels of verisimilitude: a tale is told by a character who is himself involved in a different, framing fiction. Chaucer perhaps found a model for this in Ovid, especially in the tales the daughters of Minyas tell in the fourth book of the *Metamorphoses*. Even more than Ovid, however, Chaucer exploited the distance that can separate a narrator from what he says to grant something like symbiotic autonomy to each. By allowing the Clerk to comment on Griselda, Chaucer ironically distances him from the tale, even though Griselda and he are cut from the same cloth. The Clerk, in fact, fails to measure up to his fiction. This very failure, however, is what most engages the reader. We rush in and supply the details which make the Clerk a human being. In the "Clerk's Tale," as throughout the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer beguiles us into filling the gap between a character's perception of what he says, and our perception of it. In Chaucer's maturest fiction, we are as much interpreted by our reactions to his characters as they are by what they say.

Book Reviews

Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault edited with an Introduction by Donald F. Bouchard. Translated by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977. Pp. 240. \$12.50.

Language, Counter-Memory, Practice contains seven essays by Foucault, the summary of a course he gave at Collège de France on the will to knowledge, the transcript of a discussion between him and Gilles Deleuze, and an interview—under the auspices of the journal *Actuel*—in which he discusses revolutionary action. It also contains a good introduction by Donald Bouchard, a large number of editor notes giving directions for further reading and bringing out the continuity in Foucault's work, and a revealing index ('death,' 'event' and 'language' are among the stars). First published between 1962 and 1972 and arranged in logical rather than chronological order, the Foucault pieces were, of course, picked on the basis of significance and range. But other criteria also played a role in the selection. Thus, Bouchard tended "to omit essays dealing with authors whose works are unavailable in translation" (pp. 7-8): Foucault's outstanding essay on Blanchot and "La Pensée du dehors" (the experience of the void in which language finds its space and speaks itself) is consequently excluded. Similarly, important essays were left out probably because they had already been translated: "Réponse à une question," which appeared as "History, Discourse and Discontinuity" in *Salmagundi*, no. 20 (1972) and which provides a remarkable definition of Foucault's enterprise, is conspicuously absent. All in all, however, Bouchard's collection achieves its aims: the pieces included show Foucault's profound and peculiar interest in the nature of discourse and discursive practices, indicate the methodological guidelines he follows, reveal the political consequences of his work, and constitute sound evidence of his accomplishments.

The collection is divided into three sections: "Language and the Birth of 'Literature,'" "Counter-Memory: the Philosophy of Difference" and "Practice: Knowledge and Power." According to Foucault, language finds a body ("literature") toward the end of the eighteenth century and, as a result, the writer experiences his limits, his otherness and the unknowable as such. Some of the forms taken by this experience are the subject of the four essays in the first section: desire in Sade, the absence of God in Hölderlin, the meticulous phantasmagoria of Flaubert's *Temptation*, Nietzsche's "origin without positivity," Bataille's transgression. In the second section, Foucault examines the consequences of the radically intransitive language of "literature"—it does not express—as it penetrates the domain of discursive thought. The notion "author," for instance, becomes extremely problematic and, instead of wondering about the identity of the speaker, we can and should investigate the modes of the spoken ("What is an Author?"). History can sever its

connection to memory, continuity, metaphysical and anthropological modes and can become a corrosive counter-memory ("Nietzsche, Genealogy, History"). Finally, Platonism can be reversed—as in Deleuze's *Logique du sens* or *Différence et répétition*—and the discursive event can be thought in its immediacy, materiality and difference ("Theatrum Philosophicum"). In the last section, the practical implications of Foucault's philosophical stance become obvious. The course summary underlies the links between forms of knowledge and forms of justice and power; the discussion with Deleuze defines the place of theory in political struggle (theory is practice) and stresses the enigmatic and diffuse nature of power; and the interview on revolutionary action calls for a rejection of all forms of general discourse.

If Foucault is less formidably seductive in English than in French—Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon's translation is good without being dazzling—he is not less irritating: the affection for hesitant prophesy ("perhaps one day, this century will be known as Deleuzian"!) and the frequently obtrusive imagery (I am referring more particularly to the essays in the first section and their attempt to think language in itself) are still there. Nor is he less interesting. Few contemporary writers have dealt so forcefully with death as a foundation of language ("A Preface to Transgression"); few have denounced so ruthlessly the repressive nature of humanism ("Revolutionary Action: 'Until Now'") or the explanations of a present by a past ("Nietzsche, Genealogy, History"); and few have raised so insistently the question of the possibility of truth. Sartre's Roquentin must be one of Foucault's cousins.

But what Bouchard's collection demonstrates most clearly is what Foucault himself has explicitly said or written on other occasions: in spite of his fascination with language, the author of *Madness and Civilization* and *The Order of Things* is not a structuralist (and probably never was). He is interested not in codes but in events, not in rules but in accidents, not in laws of intelligibility but in modes of existence. He prefers multiplicity to unity and surface to depth. He studies order as disorder rather than disorder as order. He teaches discontinuity, decentering, dispersion. His hero is Nietzsche as opposed to Saussure, the idiot as opposed to the system-maker. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* is an excellent portrait of a misleading French intellectual.

University of Pennsylvania

GERALD PRINCE

Letters on Literature and Politics, 1912-1972 by Edmund Wilson, edited by Elena Wilson. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Pp. xxxvii + 768. \$20.00.

"The great men of culture," declared Matthew Arnold, "are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; who have laboured to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanise it, to make it efficient outside the

clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the best knowledge and thought of the time." Edmund Wilson would almost certainly have dismissed Arnold's whole lofty formulation—he rarely had anything good to say about Arnold, thought him something of a philistine, and distrusted what he called the "gospel" of culture. Nor had Wilson much patience with the familiar notion, most recently proposed by Leon Edel, that his own critical project involved an intention to mediate "between artist and public": "This is one of the clichés about me," he complained some years ago, "but I don't remember to have said it. It is not my idea of what I do."

Yet Arnold's remarks seem to me to provide as adequate an account of the Wilsonian undertaking as any we are likely to find; for surely it must by now be apparent that Wilson *had* a passion for diffusing knowledge and making reason prevail, that he shared Arnold's dedication to the thoughtful reordering of society and to the general enlargement of the human prospect: "The end is not art or science," he once wrote to Allen Tate, "but the survival and improvement of humanity." If the solemn piety is slightly out of character (Wilson was "bored" by Albert Schweitzer and suspected that there was "something phony" about him), the statement nevertheless defines the essential nature of Wilson's secular creed and establishes his commitment to the rational mastery of experience: "For me," he affirmed only a few years before his death, "all the constructions of intellect and imagination... are inventions directed to enabling us to get through life and explain the world." Wilson must accordingly be recognized as a late representative of what may now seem an antiquated faith; for although in some of his finest work he sought to make intelligible the disaffected self-absorption of the modern imagination, it was to the ideals and assumptions of the Enlightenment that he ultimately referred. Literature, he insisted, was above all an errand of understanding, an attempt to confer some necessary coherence upon the disarray of ordinary experience and thereby to redeem it for human purposes. "That was the paradox of literature," he observed in an early essay: "provoked only by the anomalies of reality, by its discord, its chaos, its pain, it attempted... to impose on that chaos some order, to find some resolution for that discord, to render that pain acceptable." Even in his moments of bitterness and disgust—and he often enough found the human spectacle dispiriting—Wilson seems to have refused to abandon the belief that life might be made "more practicable," that the sustained exertion of mind and will might yet introduce "some logic and some meaning into the ceaseless struggles of men to make themselves at home in the universe." And it was thus toward those same large ends of order and understanding that Wilson directed his critical effort, laboring with exemplary discipline and steadiness of purpose. In *Axel's Castle* and *The Triple Thinkers* and *To The Finland Station*—in volume after volume for more than half a century—it was in fact the Arnoldian enterprise that Wilson carried forward, as he sought to humanize and to make efficient the best ideas of his time.

As a part of the continuing project which includes the publication of Wilson's notebook and diaries, Mrs. Elena Wilson has now made available a portion of her husband's correspondence. "A comprehensive collection is planned

for a later date," Edel notes in his Foreword, and we shall have to wait until then for the voyeuristic pleasures afforded by material bearing directly upon the private life. But Wilson lived chiefly in and through ideas—they were the medium through which he experienced the world; and of the development of those ideas, their origins and struggles and vicissitudes, these letters provide a most valuable transcript. Covering the whole of Wilson's long career, from the period of his education at Princeton to his last years "in two old-fashioned country towns: Wellfleet, Massachusetts, and Talcottville, New York," the selections contained in the present volume inevitably contribute to the autobiographical record already begun in *A Piece of My Mind*, *A Prelude*, and *Uptate*. But they are principally a chronicle of Wilson's professional and intellectual activity, the business letters of a man whose business was what used to be called the life of the mind. As such, they provide a partial history of friendships (and quarrels) with Christian Gauss and John Peal Bishop, Louise Bogan and Morton Zabel, Tate, Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, Nabokov; they show Wilson presiding over the literary affairs of *The New Republic* and *The New Yorker*—conceiving projects, encouraging writers—and struggling, always, to board the time and the money needed for shaping his own exploratory essays into more permanent forms, into the "long-range" writing by which he insisted that his achievement should be judged; they chart his representative passage through the political labyrinth of the thirties—his early responsiveness to the Marxist assessment of a commercial civilization in which he never felt at ease, his travels in the Soviet Union, his determined disengagement from what he once called "the literary class war": "I've tried . . . to keep outside the whole thing," he tells Dos Passos in 1935. "My policy at present is to keep away and in writing to try to ignore all parties and special doctrines." The letters remind us of Wilson's loving mastery of languages—at sixty-seven he thinks of taking up Chinese—and of the astonishing catholicity of a mind that can shift in the space of a few sentences from the question of Trotsky's complicity in the death of Gorky to a learned discussion of the history of Punch and Judy. They display all of Wilson's characteristic severity—his rigid and belligerent secularism ("I always feel depressed and let down when religion raises its ugly head"), his intolerance of cant and pretension, his contempt for the newer modes of literary discourse with what he took to be their sterile virtuosity of textual explication; and they document, finally, Wilson's profound disaffection, his growing disgust with the values and the institutions of his country, the sense of anger and estrangement which defines the last phase of Wilson's discordant encounter with American life.

"I have always been keenly aware," Wilson wrote to T. S. Matthews in 1960, "that literature demands not only all one can give it but also all one can get other people to give it." There is of course nothing very remarkable about such a conviction—the claim may even seem a form of high-minded posturing. And yet Wilson's stubborn individualism did not diminish his sense of involvement in a *collective* undertaking, and it is a part of his great distinction that he pursued his task with a kind of selfless devotion to the enterprise of letters. Fitzgerald long ago remarked that Wilson had for twenty years been his "intellectual conscience," and all through the twenties and thirties we find

him calling friends to account—criticizing, harassing, commiserating, and always insisting that writing well is the best revenge. "Brace up your artistic conscience," he urges Fitzgerald in a pair of early letters. "*Il faut faire quelque chose de vraiment beau, vous savez!*" When Phelps Putnam suffers a mental collapse Wilson reminds him of his own earlier breakdown ("my work didn't stop") and suggests that he put aside poetry for a time in favor of translation—"quite interesting...it keeps the hand in." And when Louise Bogan retreats to a sanitarium he offers similar encouragement: "Do some writing while you are in there.... The only thing that we can really make is our work. And deliberate work of the mind, imagination, and hand...in the long run remakes the world."

It is thus especially appropriate that Sherman Paul's fine book on Wilson should have had as its subtitle "A Study of Literary Vocation in Our Time"; for no other word so directly proposes the sense of personal calling and professional discipline that Wilson brought to the practice of his craft. Neither private crisis nor public confusion deflected his attention from the business at hand; scarcely any department of human knowledge was beyond the range of his voracious curiosity. Working in all genres, Wilson transfigured every experience of self and world into the objective forms of art and idea: he was one of the people on whom nothing is lost. And yet there is a disquieting corollary to this single-minded intensity, for one suspects in Wilson a certain attenuation of emotion, a kind of Jamesian deprivation of the affective life. Norman Podhoretz has shrewdly argued that although Wilson's mind was "open and...generous," his character was "rigid and closed." And the letters suggest a personality essentially stern and inflexible—formidable, demanding, unresponsive to pleasure and incapable of repose. Wilson seems to have lived in a state of constant mental alertness which is at once admirable and obsessive: he had seen his father crippled and frustrated by a society that had no use for his ideals; he had witnessed the waste and demoralization, the failures of nerve or will, among the members of his own generation; and he therefore sought to make of his purposiveness and intransigence a weapon against the temptations to mediocrity and ease and acquiescence. His father, Wilson recalls in an autobiographical essay, had "a horror of my not making something of myself"; and the repeated emphasis in the letters upon the salvific properties of "deliberate work" forcefully reminds us of the imperious Puritan conscience, the tyrant sense of moral obligation, that Wilson had always to placate and to serve.

Wilson's father belonged to a class of men who had been trained "for what had once been called the learned professions" and for whom an ideal of disinterested public service still retained much of its old authority. But such men were out of phase with American life in the late nineteenth century; they had no way of adjusting to the new political and economic order that had emerged after the Civil War. And Wilson's own political radicalism, as Podhoretz has suggested, must be understood in relation to this process of dispossession—as a response to the mercenary standards which had displaced his father's patrician values. Wilson's socialism was the expression of an aristocratic ideal. It was not a form of "parlor Bolshevism" or a version of

what is nowadays referred to as "radical chic"; but it had less to do with a commitment to the worker's revolution (Wilson explicitly rejected the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat) than with his vision of an eighteenth century civilization "based on something more comfortably human than commercial and industrial interests." If to orthodox Marxists the revolution makes its appeal entirely in terms of "the future," Wilson was capable of hoping that it might actually help to repair the broken continuity with a more generous and livable past. It is therefore not at all surprising that he thought of Marxism as "the real second blooming of the Enlightenment," of Marx and Lenin as "a part of the humanistic tradition."

And yet what is finally most important about the sense of public purpose that was Wilson's legacy from his class and family is the awareness it promoted of the sustaining connection between literature and society. "Although my single aim has been literature," he wrote from France in 1917, "my great men have never been Pater and Symonds but Dante and Socrates and Voltaire, who can certainly not be said to have been indifferent to politics; and how should I remain *au-dessus de la mêlée*." A part of Wilson's continuing importance has to do precisely with his insistence that the products of imagination engage the ordinary actualities of human experience and his refusal to accept as necessary or useful "the indifference to politics of literary and artistic people." Responsive at once to the claims of literary modernism and of revolutionary thought, Wilson undertook to heal the schism in modern consciousness by negotiating a rapprochement between the literary and social imaginations. All of which is to say that Wilson's political preoccupations of the thirties, far from indicating a revision of intention, continue and extend the project in which he had been engaged from the beginning. If *Axel's Castle* (1929) and *To The Finland Station* (1940) may be said to enact the dialectic of the decades which they consummate, they also, in their separate ways, speak to an ideal of wholeness and integration. "Axel's world of the private imagination in isolation from the life of society," Wilson writes near the end of his study of the Symbolist tradition, "seems to have been exploited and explored as far as for the present is possible....who hereafter," he asks, "will be content to inhabit a corner...in the shuttered house of one of these writers?"

But what then are we to make of that other shuttered house to which Wilson more and more withdrew, that ancestral mansion designed by a haughtier age where for twenty years he preserved both his greatness and his bitterness: "If one chooses...the way of Axel," Wilson had written, "one shuts oneself up in one's own private world, cultivating one's private fantasies, encouraging one's private manias, ultimately preferring one's absurdest chimeras to the most astonishing contemporary realities." And although it would be foolish to propose that Axel's choice was also Wilson's—few writers have been less self-indulgent or have valued objectivity more—it nevertheless seems clear that "contemporary realities" came to have a diminished claim upon his attention and that the stone house upstate served to insulate him from the intrusions of a world that he viewed with growing irritation and unease.

There is a remarkable moment at the end of Wilson's meditation on "The Author at Sixty": "I may find myself here at the center of things," he writes of Talcottville, "—since the center can be only in one's head." It is a baffling and a disturbing assertion, for surely it was just such a notion that Wilson began by opposing and resisted for so long; it suggests precisely that failure of connection, that "dreadful isolation of the artist," which the unnamed narrator of *I Thought of Daisy* tries so desperately to escape. And what one finally feels about the last years of Wilson's career is that he was *not* at the center, that in withdrawing to the citadel of his own fierce intergity and to the house which was its symbol, in pursuing his studies of devils and monsters, the Dead Sea scrolls and the minor writers of the Civil War era, Wilson had in fact abandoned his position of centrality in the culture of our time.

But symbols are of course complicated things, and it would be wrong to forget that the house which represented a kind of retreat also represented a kind of triumph. "Life in the United States," Wilson once remarked, "is much subject to disruptions and frustrations, catastrophic collapses and gradual peterings-out. I have felt myself at times, when younger, threatened by some such fate; but now, in my sixty-first year, I find that one of the things that most gratifies me is the sense of my continuity." And after an early visit to the house at Talcottville Wilson wrote to Louise Bogan: "I find I take a certain pride in it—and satisfaction in something that stays the same through all the upheavals."

Douglass College

TOM SAMET

Stylistic and Narrative Structures in the Middle English Romances by Susan Wittig. Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1977. Pp. 223. \$15.95.

The Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance by Robert W. Hanning. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977. Pp. xi + 303.

The problem with structural analysis on the conceptual model of Lévi-Strauss, as we have it in Wittig's book, is the construction of patterns "at a fairly high level of abstraction" which suggests a programmed and computerized approach. To the common reader the arrival at structural generalizations is, by now, itself something of a formulaic and ritual process. The poet, anonymous or not, "is not a deliberately creative artist in the sense of wishing to produce a new and unique thing; the poet's only purpose is to reproduce the story as it should be told." Slots are filled with linguistic codes to result in formulaic units of composition and narrative type-scenes.

The significance of Miss Wittig's book lies in the fact that it is, to my knowledge, the first structuralist analysis of a series of Middle English romances within a rigorously defined framework of theoretical principles. The study is an original accomplishment, for it has finally aligned the approach to a

whole group of Middle English poems with the theories impelled by Roman Jakobson and Milman Parry, and has done so in a thorough, systematic, and authoritative way.

Miss Wittig has chosen a group of twenty-seven non-cyclic Middle English romances for her analysis of linguistic and narrative structures. Five of these, *Libeaus Desconus*, *Sir Landeval*, *Sir Launfal*, *Sir Perceval of Galles*, *Ywain and Gawain*, have not been fully treated by Laura Hibbard Loomis (*Mediaeval Romance in England*, 1924) but are discussed in Dieter Mehl's more recent *Die mitttelenglischen Romanzen des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts*, 1967. Loomis and Mehl are our only comprehensive studies of the non-cyclical verse-romances. Thus, we now have, in the format of a book, a radically new departure from sources and analogues and literary interpretation: "What we need now, I am going to argue in this study, is a generic description based on linguistic and structural analysis which will not only clarify the formal and stylistic affiliations of this group of narratives, but will also attend to the problem of why this form came into being and what cultural needs it satisfied." The objective is carried out with impressive competence but, regrettably, not without jargon, giving the book the technically intellectual "air" so common to this type of "scientific" investigation (contrast the pleasure of reading Edmund Leach).

With inexorable logic, the exposition proceeds from a description of oral-formulaic patterns of style that are perceived as elements supportive of ritual, i.e. formulaic action, in the community at large. The three main chapters analyze, define, and classify (with tables) recurring patterns of structural narrative units ("motifeme," "type-scene," "type-episode"), firmly binding the group of romances into a system of correspondences.

What strikes one in Miss Wittig's highly controlled ordering of the texts is the way in which she deals with loose ends that do not quite fit her systematization. In discussing the "type-episode" of *threatened marriage and rescue* as a structural frame, she links the Arabian *Floris and Blancheffur* and the Celtic *Sir Orfeo* in the following manner:

"In both of these poems the action begins with the abduction of the heroine. In *Floris* the low-born Blancheffur is sold to merchants and finally to the Amiral of Babylon because, interestingly enough, she poses a threat of an unsuitable marriage to Floris, the son of the king of Spain. In *Orfeo* Heurodis is stolen by the Fairy King and taken away to his castle. In both poems, the body of the narrative is concerned with the search for the lost lady and her final recovery. The very different surface features of the two poems have obscured this common framework, however, and their similarity, so far as I know, has not been pointed out before." This statement is accompanied by the following note: "The abduction of the lady by the fairy king (and *Floris* almost certainly represents a rationalized version of the same story) seems to have been a favorite story type among the Celts."

With all the respect one can muster for "deep" common structures that underlie the surface of conscious or unconscious human constructs, the high-handedness with which the totally different historical context of the two poems is dissolved is breath-taking. Occasionally an element is also shoved aside when it does not conform to the schema. Thus the theme of betrayal

in a structural configuration of "the eager lady and the reluctant groom," as, for example, in *King Horn* or *Bevis of Hamtoun*, is swept away by saying that "the attachment of *betrayal* to this type-episode may well be a product of some contemporary situation."

However, the formalized delineation of structural repetitions also yields new insights into themes that have been long taken for granted: "revenge in the romances does not appear to be obligatory or essential; it often occurs in answer to certain kinds of villainy, but not always. And when the death of the villain does take place, it usually comes about within the framework of an impartial justice—that is, judgment is often a community verdict upon the guilt of the offender rather than judgment summarily executed by the victim or the victim's kin." When there is an exception, we have a pointer to an affiliation with saga.

The generic affinity of the group of romances which is demonstrated in this book by structural affiliation is grounded in the thesis that the romances are constructed on a common model reflecting basic cultural patterns of community ritual and belief. Like Lévi-Straussian myths, these poems function as "mediation" to cope with the most disturbing contradictions and conflicts within the communal family as, for instance, the tension between classes which the romances bring into balance. There is a puzzling element in Miss Wittig's conclusion at the very end. Having methodically worked her way into an ideological clearing of structures, she feels impelled to distance us, categorically, from the medieval world of the romances: "Our own view of the world is very different, and what was coherent and ordered to a time long past is undecipherable confusion to us now." This, surely, is untenable. The historical use and influence of discernible literary conventions in the romances makes them clearly decipherable from points of vantage other than that of structuralist analysis. However, Miss Wittig's book is a belated methodological landmark in medieval studies and should be welcomed on its own terms.

The critical premise of Mr. Hanning's book is clear at the outset: the author defines his approach to twelfth-century romance as a "metaphor of social reality" removed from the abstractions of "patristic" and "aesthetic" critics.

The central problem of individuality is familiar to every reader of nineteenth-century novels. It is the relation of the individual to a strictly defined code of behavior within which the individual moves and which is regarded as the norm of social order and moral survival. What happens in the twelfth century—the brilliant age of scientific renaissance and medieval humanism—is that the human condition, depicted in the literature of the earlier Middle Ages as totally subservient to God, is transcended in an exaltation of the individual, the knightly hero of romance, who through love and adventure pursues an ideal of personal, inner worth. His very individuality ennobles his native ground, the society which contains and sustains him.

The integrating element in Hanning's concept of twelfth-century individuality is the quality of "engin," to the manifestation of which, in personal history and chivalric romance, he applies a rigorous analysis. The word, derived from the Latin *ingenium*, essentially renders the characteristics de-

scribed in Southern's study of medieval humanism: ready wit, cleverness, practical wisdom; as Southern puts it, "fertile in invention, rapid and irrepres-sible in action."

In Hanning's view, "engin" is the crucial and special endowment which marks the individual in the romances of Chrétien de Troyes (in particular, *Cligès*, *Erec and Enide*, *Yvain*), in *Ipomedon*, *Partonopeu de Blois*, and the *Roman d'Énéas*, in contrast with the inflexible epic virtues of *La Chanson de Roland* in which "engin"—"trickery"—is unworthy of Christian heroes and is attributed to the Saracens.

While the quality of "engin" is shown by Hanning to give all distinctive characters of romance (Lunette, Urrique) the stamp of individuality, the dynamic principle propelling knightly destiny is formulated in the idea of "kairos," the critical moment in the individual's inner awareness which, according to Hanning, constitutes the most dramatic moment in courtly romance. It is the point "in which self-awareness undergoes revolutionary change, leading to a profound modification of the basic desires which shape the actions and goals of a protagonist."

The chivalric quest for honor and love is thus seen as the literary expression of an individual-centered world in which the code of chivalry, while still exemplary, is tested and questioned by poet and reader.

The book is well organized, tightly knit, and thoroughly analytical. The first three chapters define the concept of individuality in the twelfth century, culminating in a close reading of the French courtly texts; chapters four and five discuss the mimetic techniques of the chivalric poets, to represent individuality, and chapter six, the final chapter, examines romance individuality in relation to romance plot.

An "Afterword" raises some interesting questions about the evolution of Arthurian romance in the early thirteenth century from what Hanning calls "the first generation" of chivalric romance in the second half of the twelfth century, the subject of his book. Hanning's conclusion is that "the Arthurian vision, insofar as it is both social—and individual-centered, contains an inner contradiction which must sooner or later destroy it." In spite of its relentless logic, the conclusion does not seem to be so clear-cut. "The love relationship," says Hanning, "because it was private and, in its origins, arbitrary, could well lead to a knight's loving another man's wife—as happened to Lancelot and, of course, to Tristan." Though striking in its formulation, this strict separation of "private" and "public" in the treatment of love in chivalric romance, is somehow unconvincing. In the Arthurian cycle, "Arthur's almost wilful blindness to his wife's infidelity" may, in fact, also be viewed as a manifestation of individual self-awareness. It has the dignity of a conscious act for the public good in which there is a private and kingly vision of the social role of the individual.

This sophisticated awareness of the individual in his interplay with social and historical forces, as presented in the Arthurian cycle and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, strikes one as an inevitable development after reading Mr. Hanning's book, for it is the differentiation of the individual as an autonomous moral and psychological, not anarchic, unit which the twelfth century accomplished.

Hanning's central concept of twelfth-century individuality thus also fits Langland's portrayal of the divine that, by taking an individual man's nature, seems human.

The achievement of Hanning's book is that it firmly adjusts our conception of chivalric romance to a crucial stirring in medieval renaissance thought, while providing us with a close and penetrating reading of individual romances.

DOROTHEE METLITZKI

Yale University

Samuel Johnson and Poetic Style by William Edinger. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977. Pp. xvi + 272. \$17.00.

This is a very good book. Directing his attention to a crucial feature of his subject's critical theory, the author treats Dr. Johnson's concept of poetic style chiefly as a reflection of an empiricism rooted in the nominalism of Bacon and Locke. He prefaces his analysis with two chapters on the premises and methods of the neoclassical theory which Johnson both inherited and modified. Like the rest of the book, these are ably organized, terminologically accurate (a vital point in theoretical discussion), and engagingly written. Mr. Edinger doesn't waste words—or paragraphs. In commendably small space, he examines not only those neoclassical critics, including the Frenchmen Arnauld, Rapin, and Fénelon, whose thinking represents the historical antecedents of Johnson's own, but also, and most enlighteningly, *their* classical mentors: Cicero, Longinus, Quintilian. Apart from its main purpose and in convincing refutation of a currently held opposite belief, this survey supports the further conclusion that English neoclassicism is a distinct historical phenomenon, though definable not by the consistency of its theory but by "the orthodoxy of its taste" (p. 157).

Mr. Edinger thinks that the troublesome inconsistencies in Johnson's critical thinking can in large measure be reconciled. In this endeavor he succeeds best on the issue of the particular and the general, effectively discriminating Johnson's position from superficially similar neo-Platonic views by assimilating it to the Hegelian concrete universal. He also argues skillfully to exonerate his man from Professor Wellek's charge of "naive literary realism" (p. 94). This task is ungrateful and so finally, I think, less than fully convincing. The embarrassment felt by Johnson's admirers (this reviewer among them) arises not so much from his generalizations as from the theoretical implications of specific passages in his practical criticism, e. g. his declaration that Shakespeare's dialogue is "level with life." By the term *fiction*, Mr. Edinger believes, Johnson meant mainly hackneyed classical mythology (p. 82). Yet when we recall his complaint, among several similar ones, that *Lycidas* is false and insincere because Milton and King are known never to have been shepherds, we are not so sure.

The author's analysis of his specific topic is perhaps disproportionately brief.

One could wish, for instance, that he had explored more fully the *quaestio vexata* (in de Quincey's phrase for it) of poetic diction.

But these issues are highly debatable and not likely to be settled very soon or by a single book, even one as fine as this. In the meantime, the quality of what he has done will make even Mr. Edinger's most exacting readers hope for more to come.

EMERSON R. MARKS

The University of Massachusetts—Harbor Campus

Ruins and Empire: The Evolution of a Theme in Augustan and Romantic Literature by Laurence Goldstein. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977. Pp. xiv + 272. \$12.50.

This is a fine book, wide-ranging, provocative, critically graceful as well as incisive in its relating of ideas of ruins and empire to their literary embodiments, and unusually illuminating in its tracing of the historical evolution of a major, and often personally decisive or determining, theme in the lives and works of a large number of literary figures from the Renaissance through the mid-nineteenth century in both England and America. Ruins, Professor Goldstein posits in his introductory chapter, ubiquitously appear in literature as "a means of mortifying in the public those worldly desires which caused the great empires, like Persepolis and Egypt, to decline and fall" (3). As a "mental construct" the "ruin sentiment" (one that discovers and dramatizes "significant patterns of change and decay in everyday scenes and events") was "capable of universal application and for that reason a determinant of policy and conduct in a time of expanding empire" (4).

In the Renaissance, exemplified here by Spenser's *The Ruines of Time*, the standard "bardic assumption" was that the poem, itself an artifact of civilization and hence an epitome of the very creative impulse it celebrates in the ruins contemplated, became (or could become) a prophetic goading of society to construct in the present edifices or civilizations, a life worthy not only of its illustrious predecessors but also of posterity's regard. Thus Spenser (unlike Sir Thomas Browne, for example, who in *Religio Medici* and *Urne Buriall* sees ruins as the decaying and fallen body, the relics of original sin, and hence glorifies them as "providential finality" rather than "immortal longings") provides in his ruins poems avatars of the Renaissance belief that the glories of past civilizations are a "spur to virtue" (16). Poetry is thus the "memorie" of the race, the "embalming" of objects in words so that they may not, as exemplars, be lost to the world (17). Yet, paradoxically, in the later books of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser acknowledges the contrary thrust of the same myth, a "recognition of the inevitable ruin of empires" however greater the perfection of our own as it emerges out of a perception of the reasons for decay in the past (43).

By the eighteenth century the ruin sentiment takes on the tone of the latter view rather than the former, "the prophet's scorn for wordly splendor":

When we reflect on the sinking fortune of nations, and the sudden falls of mighty kingdoms, we are impressed with an awful idea of the supreme Disposer, in Whose hands a whole nation is but as one man. . . . How can we persist in building our pride upon such transitory foundations [as past empires of "greatness"], and in sacrificing the repose of our minds for such unstable rewards?

While this passage is quoted by Goldstein (5) from an anonymous writer in a 1793 periodical, he regards it as a summing-up of the principal features of eighteenth-century ruin sentiment. Goldstein's own summary of the theme's development is equally apt:

My aim is not to catalogue or classify the many expressions of the ruin sentiment but to select representative works spanning three centuries which demonstrate how the experience of horror [at ruins] results in renewed loyalty to some enduring symbol of potentiality, be it place, persons, or artifact. . . [and how] those writers. . . invest immortal longings in some wordly place which they conceive as the site of a new heaven and new earth. (8)

Chapter 2, on Spenser and *The Ruins of Time*, is devoted to that poet's paradoxical view, as I have noted, of the English state as such an earthly paradise. Chapter 3 contains an impressive analysis of John Dyer's radical shift from the "unadulterated joy" of his *The Country Walk* to the "continuous gloom" of his *The Ruins of Rome* (31). In the former Dyer is convinced that "the architecture and social landscapes erected beyond the basic needs of man will crumble or be superseded; the simple home man builds, the fields and animals he cultivates, represent his own and his country's chief resources"—as well as the bulwark against present or future ruin (28). In the latter, contrary to Addison's and Thomson's grand descriptions of Italy, Dyer "taps the roots of horror" and "frightened by the voice of time" inherent in ruins is driven toward "an enthusiastic embrace of the unruined future" in what Goldstein describes as the "defensive posture" that we recognize as our own best effort to stave off the trauma of horror (35, 39).

That "embrace" we find in Dyer's *The Fleece*, a "fusion of pastoral poem and commercial tract" reflecting "the Whig strategy to undermine not only monarchical power but the *mortmain* of influence passed down through the great families" (47). It is also, of course, a Utopian poem, based on the assumption that "England as a paradise uniquely bequeathed ideal conditions for the most rewarding and noble enterprises" (51). Even so, as in Spenser, paradox abides here, for the pastoral Golden Age Dyer envisions for England—replete with its virtues and piety as well as its home-based "industry"—clashes head-on with the progress of empire and the long-range development of world trade and manufacture. The latter, Goldstein shows in a remarkable chapter (5), is most graphically detailed in Defoe's *Roxana*, in which the avoidance of ruination is equated with capitalistic expansion and the thrust toward greater and greater empire.

The graveyard poets—especially Young, Blair, Hervey, and even Cowper—return in a sense to the views of Sir Thomas Browne, imaging the fallen

natural world (and of course man's own internal half-acre) in the crumbling of past empires, and urging by their meditations on self-ruin that their contemporaries guide themselves toward a spiritual commonwealth more glorious and fruitful than the Indies (74). These writers are thus not merely religious prophets (or ranters) but political propagandists as well. Connoisseurs of imperial decay Goldstein calls them (84), not the least of whom is Goldsmith (Chapter 7) whose *Deserted Village* is seen, strikingly, as a discovery that his own alienation is mirrored by a historical problem such that Goldsmith can establish "spiritual dispossession as a permanent fact of modern life" (106). At the same time, emerging out of the graveyard school and its insistence on a fallen past and present is the growth of mental pastoral Utopias, "dreamscapes of perfect happiness" (88), a process by which religious modes of defense are secularized into nostalgia for childhood—however paradoxical that imaginative retreat was, oscillating as it did (for Cowper, for example, and later for Byron) between being "an asylum from the chaotic and disturbing present" and an inaccessible, irretrievable, and sentimentalized loss (ruin) and hence even the "soul's hopeless alienation from grace" (88-89).

The link between the child of the past (and the associated landscape of the mind impervious to decay) and the man of the present remained for Wordsworth to forge, and Goldstein's analysis of *Home at Grasmere*, major portions of *The Prelude*, the relatively neglected *The Tuft of Primroses*, and the Immortality Ode (Chapters 8-11) establishes Wordsworth as not only the inheritor of a powerful literary-philosophical-political-imaginative tradition but its most consummate artistic and prophetic analyst and the supreme internalizer of the entire historical process. This analysis is far too complex for me to outline here. It is also too good to spoil via fragmentary quotation. But I do want to mention especially the insights it yields into Wordsworth's conception of the child (with the political as well as imaginative and social implications of that concept), into his later "lapse" into orthodoxy and conservatism (I don't know of a better explanation of this still much-vexed problem), into the central issues of the dream of the Arab rider in *The Prelude*, into the function of repetition (of event as well as language and image) in his poetry, and into the all-important idea, obviously related to the former point, of the "continuous self" which transcends all ruin.

Goldstein concludes his book with a brief analysis of the continuity of his theme in American literature, particularly in Bryant, Cooper, and Thomas Cole (both his poetry and his Herculean series of paintings *The Course of Empire*). Each "perceived the sorrow of the human condition in the same way: that man is not only fated to destroy Eden but to want its destruction as a proof of his manifest destiny" (231).

There are other books that deal with this subject, and separate analyses of all the poets and poems included in Goldstein's book that necessarily pay attention to the theme of ruins, if not always of empire. Goldstein has read them all and they have served him well. But there is no sustained synthesis that I know of comparable to his. Though not directly related to *Ruins and Empire* other new books like Richard Feingold's *Nature and Society: Later Eighteenth-Century Uses of the Pastoral and Georgic* (just issued by Rutgers)

and the sumptuous *Nature and the Victorian Imagination* (edited by U. C. Knoepfelmacher and G. B. Tennyson for the California Press) may complement, supplement, and extend Goldstein's—as does the previous work in this general area by Paul Zucker, Paul Fussell, Lois Whitney, Maynard Mack, Henry Nash Smith, R. W. B. Lewis and other scholars—but I intend it as no small compliment to Goldstein's achievement to be included in this company.

ROBERT F. GLECKNER

Duke University

The Literature of Change: Studies in the Nineteenth Century Provincial Novel
by John Lucas. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1977. Pp. xii + 217. \$18.50.

Taking the theme of social alienation for his subject, John Lucas explores the ambiguities of community, class and family in three provincial novelists, Elizabeth Gaskell, William Hale White and Thomas Hardy. The treatment of Hale White is perceptive and illuminating as Lucas defines the “disciplined stoicism” that sets White apart from the moral fervour of Eliot and the social dedication of Ruskin. Certainly it does no harm to be reminded that Hale White is not Mary Rutherford.

It is in White's women characters that Lucas finds the sharpest disjunctions between social aspiration and personal identification. For White's women there are only blind alleys as they struggle to escape the confines of self and society. Marriage is sought as a “consolation or refuge from the limitations of community.” In a brilliant interpretation of *Clara Hopgood* Lucas traces Clara's painful deliverance from a succession of concealed traps to a future that offers a terrible freedom of spiritual preservation and physical death. *Clara Hopgood* is a difficult work but Lucas' reading is persuasive because he does not accept a sentimental interpretation of Clara's final choice. To be alone in death is better than to be dead in marriage.

These days it requires a critic of some courage to declare that *Jude the Obscure* is a muddled work, and Sue a character that irritated the writer as much as she does the reader. According to Lucas, Hardy clearly wanted Sue to be a “standard woman,” representative of her kind, then blurred the argument by introducing the idea that it was not the social process that made women like Sue victims, but “the inexorable laws of nature.” For Lucas it is the women characters that reveal most clearly the social misgivings and indecisions of Hardy. In *The Woodlanders* Lucas sees Hardy's “most perfect fiction and one in which he hardly ever puts a foot wrong.” *The Woodlanders* admirably sustains Lucas' themes of alienation from class and self in its modulations of change and loss, loneliness and regret. Some Hardy scholars will undoubtedly question Lucas' understanding of the relationship between Melbury and Grace. There is surely more than social aspiration and property rights involved in Melbury's attitude to his daughter.

Elizabeth Gaskell is moving steadily into the ranks of major Victorian novelists and changing from David Cecil's “gentle dove” into something of a

social hawk. Although it has been stated before, Lucas does well to iterate Gaskell's superiority to Engels as a social critic. Thanks to W. O. Henderson and others we now know where Engels found most of his information on Manchester. Like Marx, Engels' research is more redolent of the library than the factory. Nonetheless, as Lucas demonstrates, *Mary Barton* and *North and South* offer difficulties that show the characters moving in one direction while the narrator points resolutely in another. The narrator seems bent on soothing the liberal reader's trepidations while John Barton murders the mill owner's son. It is at this point that we surely need to attend to the problem of social censorship in the Victorian novel.

We are all acquainted with Moodie's ubiquitous "unmarried daughter" who forced writers into convolutions of sexual evasion, ranging from Thackeray's mermaid to Dickens' "little" heroines. However, an equally powerful restraint was that form of Podsnappery which made social comment difficult and a realistic treatment of trades unions and strikes impossible. Sex and strikes were both subjects that had to be treated obliquely, if at all, and the former was more easily rendered into coded prose than the latter. It is this which accounts to a large degree for the gaping incongruities between narrative voice and incident in Gaskell's social novels. John Barton dies in Carson's arms, an emblem of social reconciliation, but Carson weeps over his old enemy believing that his son died from a father's desire to defend a daughter's honour. No one told Carson why his son was killed and, when he asked, no one "rightly knew." The narrator says one thing, but Job Legh and his mates know what silence and solidarity mean. Gaskell realized that her readers, like Carson, would find sexual vindication more defensible than any form of social retaliation.

The technique of evasion is often clumsy in Gaskell's novels but the need for it was imposed upon her by a reading public that did not want any change in the class structure beyond the Dickensian call for more sympathy and good will. Elizabeth Gaskell wrote sharply to a friend that she had not been fair to the manufacturers in *Mary Barton* because all her sympathy was with the workers, but the narrator could not address her readers so freely.

John Lucas does well to draw our attention to the merits of "Cousin Phillis" and "A Dark Night's Work," but his interpretation of Preston in *Wives and Daughters* is open to question. Far from being "intensely disliked" by the narrator, there is a measure of sympathy for the first of Cynthia's victims. It is not his social arrogance that is condemned but his sexual aggression which encompasses all women, including Lady Harriet.

Perhaps it is carping to complain of shortcomings which are clearly in the publisher's domain. However, for \$18.50 one expects more than a brief and inadequate index, no bibliography, a meagre sprinkling of footnotes and typographical errors that offer George Elliot, and Charlie Kinraid contending with Charlie Kincaid on the same page. Despite these failings *The Literature of Change* is a stimulating book written in a fresh and lively manner that immediately sets it apart from those interminable theses trundled up the critical hills.

CORAL LANSBURY

Rutgers University

The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Carlyle. Edited by Charles Richard Sanders and Kenneth J. Fielding Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1977. Vol. V (Jan. 1829-Sept. 1831), Pp. xxii + 448; Vol. VI (Oct. 1831-Sept. 1833), Pp. xvi + 450; Vol. VII (Oct. 1833-Dec. 1834), Pp. xv + 442. \$20.00/vol.

I Too Am Here, edited by Alan and Mary McQueen Simpson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977. Pp. xx + 307. \$13.95.

Thomas Carlyle: A Bibliography of English-Language Criticism 1824-1974 by Rodger L. Tarr. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976. Pp. + 442. \$20.00/vol.

Revival of interest in Thomas and Jane Carlyle continues with the recent publication of volumes five through seven of the *Collected Letters*, a bibliography of criticism on Carlyle's work, and a thematically-organized edition of Jane's letters.

Professor Tarr's clearly-stated goal is "to be comprehensive, listing in standard format the response of the English critics to Carlyle from the earliest found review in 1824 to the present." In comparison with what was previously available to us, Tarr has succeeded. He began by reviewing and checking each item that Isaac Watson Dyer published in his 1929 *Bibliography of Thomas Carlyle's Writing and Ana*. Tarr has extended and written in standard bibliographical form Dyer's incomplete citations, thereby clarifying ambiguous references in the earlier title, and he has added 1200 entries to the 2200 published by Dyer. Of the new listings, approximately 400 were written during Carlyle's life.

The problem for any bibliographer of a major literary figure is that comprehensiveness can never be absolute. In part, that is because of the utter impossibility of discovering every title that contains major sections on the author; in part because errors of transcription do occasionally slip in and later become the cause of pleasure for nit-picking reviewers. Tarr acknowledges such limitations in his study as an incomplete index of British and American newspapers and a decision to omit "twentieth century reviews of works on Carlyle... except in the case of review-essays or those that contribute directly to Carlyle scholarship." Judgment, then, is part of the bibliographer's baggage, and it frequently collides with completeness. Not in this collection are such titles as *Number Five Cheyne Row* (1950) by John B. Cowan, *Alms for Oblivion* (1946) by George Carver, "Carlylean Courtship" (1938), which is also the first fifteen chapters of *Speaking Dust* by E. Thornton Cook, *Leaders of the Victorian Revolution* (1934) by John W. Cunliffe, and *Benevolent and Useful Lives* (1891), Robert Cochrane, ed. Such are the impossibilities of bibliographic completeness.

The format of Tarr's book is photographed typescript with unjustified right margins. Although such publications are not aesthetically appealing, they need suffer no other weaknesses. In Tarr's work, however, I note the occasional typographical awkwardness of an organizing date (such as 1950)

appearing as the last item on one page and the alphabetized items for that year on the page following. As one would expect, however, each item is located within chronology by year of publication and information is consistently and concisely given in standard format. Apparatus at the end of the book includes an appendix of cited journals and newspapers, an author index and a subject index. When items have been reprinted, that information is part of the citation and double entries are therefore avoided.

The need for additional work is obvious. Tarr notes that a bibliography derived from foreign language journals and one of Carlyle's primary materials should be written. I would add the need for a selected annotated bibliography of Carlylean criticism. Such a text would be a valuable companion to Tarr's work which aims for comprehensive coverage rather than critical assessment. I am, however, indebted to Professor Tarr for compiling a bibliography that is superior to and more inconclusive than any other work on Carlyle.

Quite a different book has been produced by Alan and Mary Simpson. It is not a book that will significantly alter perceptions about the Carlyles, nor is it a basic sourcebook for scholarly examination. The Simpsons have done precisely what they set out to do—to write "a book for enjoyment—for bedside, weekend and vacation—with the minimum of scholarly apparatus."

An emphasis of the 1970's that runs through the letters selected is that Jane, in her marriage, was kept from intellectual self-fulfillment. It is clear that Jane was a brilliant writer and that Geraldine Jewsbury and Carlyle frequently urged her to produce public writing of her own. That she chose not to do so is well known though the reasons for her choice bear examination. Her life centered on her husband and her household. She was the guardian angel in charge of noise control, taxes, maids, house cleaning, painting, and rebuilding. She was intellectually alert, the lion's wife who accepted the strictures of the age against the "forward wife." Like wives in every age, she would have been pleased with more husbandly concern, a closer relationship and less competition for Carlyle's attention. But Carlyle could give only scant attention to his wife's feelings and it was impossible for him to develop a close physical relationship with her. And so, when Carlyle began to spend days, then weekends, then weeks with the Ashburtons, Jane felt pushed aside. Since physical intimacy did not undergird her marriage, she had very little left to herself when she had to share intellectual closeness. Especially annoying was the further imposition of sharing her husband at the whim of the first Lady Ashburton and in the Lady's several homes.

At times, then, Jane had little of Carlyle to herself. She did, however, have a wit and a genius that are revealed again and again in her letters. Though the Simpsons make little of it, Jane's rhetoric deserves analysis which it has not yet received. Her nervous energy, her sharp perceptions, her flair for storytelling are all brilliantly revealed in her private correspondence. She was mistress of hyperbole and italics, and her dramatic flair molded her world into scenarios and anecdotes. Her powerful sense of the incongruous impregnates her story of the maid who gave birth to an illegitimate child at Cheyne Row. "I shall only say that while she is in labor in the small room at the end of the dining room, Mr. Carlyle was taking tea in the dining room

with Miss Jewsbury talking to him!!! Just a thin small door between them!" Jane's life was filled with stories that she recounted artfully and with gusto, and their retelling seemed to bring perspective and balance and humor to her own life.

The Simpsons' introduction provides an overview of Jane's biography with some commentary organized to the theme of women's liberation. The biography traces Jane's genealogical connections to John Knox, explicates her hero-worship of her father and then discusses the unusual five-year courtship of Jane and Thomas, a courtship that ended in a wedding ceremony attended by four guests. Three chapters of the letters deal with subjects long debated in the old "Froude-Carlyle controversy." "Lady Ashburton," "Illness" and "Living Miracle" center upon material that was extremely important to James Anthony Froude as he published the four-volume biography, the letters and memorials, and the reminiscences. The introduction also has three segments that deal with the same controversy. In repeating well-established assumptions, the Simpsons underscore the self-pity that emerges from Jane's letters and Carlyle's ready though posthumous acknowledgement of his love for his wife.

Such a book should not be attacked for doing what it was intended to do. To complain about a paucity of footnotes or the generous use of the ellipsis is to offer criticism that the editors disclaim in prefatory remarks. The Simpsons have given us a book for casual reading; they aimed low and hit the mark.

Of a very different nature is the *Collected Letters*, the "Duke-Edinburgh" edition of the letters of Thomas and Jane Carlyle. All of the promise of volumes one through four (1970) has been developed in volumes five through seven. This, the most comprehensive and accurate edition of the letters, is a model of painstakingly accurate scholarship. Footnotes are thoroughly but not excessively detailed, and yet the editors acknowledge their inability to trace a reference whenever that problem infrequently appears. Many previously unpublished letters are printed here with fidelity to the Carlyles' occasionally idiosyncratic punctuation, spelling and capitalization, becoming part of an edition that will give readers data as long as the Carlyles are discussed.

Volume five covers several themes: the illness of "our Sister Mag," Carlyle's respect for Goethe, his deep attachments to his mother and father, his concern that brother Jack, the doctor, make something of his life ("His *worst* fault, indeed almost only one, is *procrastination*."), various ideas he was to develop in *Sartor* ("my prodigal son"), and brother Alick's farm problems. One of the previously unpublished letters reveals that Carlyle considered writing about Frederick the Great as early as 1830, and another by Carlyle presents an insightful remark that "I am one of those that forget nothing; on whose hard heart only *Diamonds* will write; but once written, the letters stand there defying all tear and wear" (July 3, 1830). Previously unpublished letters in volume six number 32, in volume seven, 28. Although some letters are as incidental as an invitation to John Stuart Mill to have coffee with Carlyle, others comment on the Reform Bill, family responsibilities, publishing matters,

death, reading and moving. The editors have also included Carlyle's previously unpublished review of Abraham Hayward's translation of Faust, the translation that Carlyle, as an elderly man, was to consider the best that had ever been published. In volume seven appears Jane's "The Rival Brothers," a fragment of manuscript verse-drama that was located too late for chronological placement in the *Letters*.

Two other works can only be mentioned here. A very recent publication is *Carlyle's Friendships and Other Studies* (1977), a collection of eleven previously published essays by Charles Richard Sanders, this country's most productive and best-known Carlylean scholar. Also recently announced for publication in December 1977 is John Clubbe's edited and abridged version of Froude's *Life of Carlyle*.

Carlyle's admonition to his readers was that they "Produce, Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it in God's name!" Nearly 100 years after Carlyle's death, his students live his advice.

Wayne State University

EDWARD SHARPLES

Thoreau and the American Indians by Robert F. Sayre. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977. Pp. xix + 239. \$14.50.

The central argument of this important book is that Thoreau very largely accepted the nineteenth century idea of savagism, that complex of stereotypical notions which whites held about "the Indian." Savagism defined "the Indian" as a self-reliant and solitary hunter, a childlike figure capable either of nobility or fierce cruelty but always uncivilized, anti-cultural, and doomed to extinction. The idea served the white imagination in at least two important ways. To the expansionist advocate of Manifest Destiny, savagism lent cosmic inevitability to the extermination of native Americans. To pro-Indian savagists like Thoreau, however, the idealized Indian provided a figure for identification, who at once humanized the wilderness and enjoyed the desired original relationship to nature. The "Indian" became Thoreau's "predestined moral ally" in a philosophic and cultural war against civilization.

Sayre ably develops his thesis with detailed readings of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, *Walden*, *The Maine Woods*, and pertinent sections of the *Journal*. He also makes skillful use of material from the "Indian Books," Thoreau's 2,800 manuscript pages of reading notes and quotations now at the Pierpont Morgan Library. Seeking a unifying principle in *A Week*, Sayre convincingly reads the book as Thoreau's abbreviated history of Indian-white relations in America. Less effective is the chapter on *Walden*. That *Walden* represents Thoreau's "vision quest" is an intriguing notion, but Sayre's development of the idea uncovers little about the work that is not already familiar. Focusing in *The Maine Woods* on Thoreau's relationships with his guides, Sayre contends that "Chesuncook" and "The Allegash and East Branch" reveal Thoreau's "progress in breaking through many of

the prejudices of savagism." Thoreau was able to present Joe Aitteon and Joe Polis as "both Indians and complex, interesting individuals"; indeed, in Joe Polis Thoreau created the most realistic portrait of a native American by any white writer of the nineteenth century.

The "clearer knowledge" of the American Indians which Thoreau eventually achieved was largely the fruit of the careful study recorded in the "Indian Books." These fact-books have themselves long been the subjects of speculation. One popular theory, originated by F. B. Sanborn and repeated by many scholars, holds that they were source books for a monumental work on the Indians which Thoreau planned. Presumably this work was part of the "broken task" left by Thoreau's death and mentioned by Emerson in his eulogy. Sayre vigorously challenges this belief, suggesting instead that the "Indian Books" should "be construed more broadly as self-education and preparation for what he *did* write." What Thoreau did write about the American Indians was considerable and highly deserving of study, as *Thoreau and the American Indians* richly attests.

FRITZ OEHLISCHLAEGER

Wayne State University

Boccaccio's Two Venuses by Robert Hollander. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977. Pp. xi + 246. \$17.50.

The focus of this study is on Boccaccio's so-called minor Italian works (*opere minori in volgare*.) Hollander's intent is to show the inaccuracy of the prevailing notion that the earlier works were written by a pagan Boccaccio dedicated to praising the joys of carnal love while the last of them was by a convert who had finally embraced traditional Christian values. He argues convincingly that the minor works represent a consistent "attack upon the religion of love" by an author whose Christian values are never in doubt, even if those of his poet-lover/narrator are. It is not Boccaccio but the nature of his narrative that undergoes a transformation as it moves from the ironic mode of expression of the early works to the unblunted directness of the *Corbaccio*.

There is no doubt that there are two kinds of love in the *opere minori*: one which is good and governed by a celestial and marital Venus, and another which is bad and presided over by the same carnal Venus who inspired the Ovidian passions of the *Ars amatoria*. Hollander finds that all of Boccaccio's writings "involve the central opposition of the Lord of Love and Christian morality," and his conclusion is that Boccaccio presented carnal love only in order to condemn it. What ultimately emerges is an author who thinks of himself as the "new Ovid" because he writes of love, but one who cannot be Ovidian because he recognizes the sinful nature of carnal love.

Boccaccio's Two Venuses will not go unchallenged, but it should make a significant contribution toward changing the image of an author who, too often, is thought of, anachronistically, as the spokesman for a "naturalist" moral doctrine.

ANDREA DI TOMMASO

Wayne State University

Shakespeare's Sonnets edited by Stephen Booth. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977. Pp. xix + 578. \$25.00.

Obviously the result of many years of thoughtful, sensitive, and persistent engagement with Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, this edition, which reproduces the 1609 Quarto alongside a cautiously modernized text, not only offers the fullest and best annotation for these poems, but also extends the mode of criticism of *An Essay on Shakespeare's Sonnets*, still the finest book on the subject. In his preface and in the brilliant essays appended to the notes on sonnets 116 and 146, Booth includes a critical manifesto for the kind of reading, understanding, and (uncloseable) interpretation he advocates. He proposes a "conservative" (p. 517) criticism that does not exclude any of the "Multitudinous meanings, overtones, and suggestions of reference" (p. xiii) found in the *Sonnets*. Attending to the clash of syntactical and logical patterns, to Shakespeare's "constructive vagueness" (p. 419) through which the fullest "ideational potential in words" (p. 371) is realized, he demonstrates repeatedly the ways the poet typically can "invest abstract statements with the urgency, vividness, and apprehensibility of concrete particulars" (p. 387).

Using the Bible, Tilley's proverb collection, *The Book of Common Prayer*, the OED and the rest of Shakespeare to help define the *Sonnets*' rich polysemy, Booth produces a leisurely, but perceptive and informative, series of glosses, composing, by the way, an unalphabetized dictionary of Elizabethan idioms. Since he can assume the availability of the Rollins *Variorum*, he mainly cites the work of editors and critics of the past three decades, pointedly ignoring, however, most of the perennial controversies with which they and their predecessors have been concerned. Booth relegates to an appendix brief discussion of dating, arrangement and grouping, biography and identification of the young man, rival poet, and dark lady, and Shakespeare's "homosexuality." Militantly anticontextual, except in the spheres of language and intellectual history, Booth restricts his commentary to the idioms the hypothetical reader of the 1609 Quarto would have understood. He thus avoids the problem of dealing with the *Sonnets* as a large unit or of defining their sociocultural situation as coterie literature. In glossing subsidiary meanings of words like "arising" (29.11) as "advancement" and "countenance" (86.13) as "patronage" he reveals a keen awareness of the social encoding of Shakespeare's poetic language, but he does not choose to discuss the phenomenon on a larger scale than that of the occasional word or phrase. For both good and ill, this kind of formalism ignores some of the contextual constraints on interpretation.

Booth unabashedly discusses imitative form, the stylistic mirroring of thematic content, even to the point of stating that Shakespeare sometimes deliberately confused his reader. Here, as elsewhere in this kind of affective stylistics, the issue is a psychological one, though Booth eschews psychological models or vocabulary. When, however, he discusses the ways suggestions and innuendoes (especially sexual ones) counter the ostensible meanings and tones of particular passages or when he refers to Shakespeare's technique of flattering accusation, the emotional conflicts and psychodynamics of critic and author need to be illuminated, perhaps, by the insights of depth psychology. A critic

like Booth, who so skillfully interprets verbal, metaphoric, and syntactic condensations, who argues for the "extra-logical coherence" (p. 370) of these masterful lyrics, and who has passed beyond a "Verbal Icon" formalism to a response-centered criticism, deals with issues psychoanalytic critics are self-consciously attempting to articulate. Though, like sociology and biography, psychology is deliberately excluded as a subject, psychological perspectives, insights, and models are implicit in the critical methodology of this book, which should be valued for a long time for its perceptiveness as well as its usefulness.

ARTHUR F. MAROTTI

Wayne State University

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Thomas Wyatt's Poetry: The Politics of Love

Wyatt's "He is not ded that sometyme hath a fall" examines various natural consolations for political disgrace.

HE is not ded that sometyme hath a fall.
The Sonne retorneth that was vnder the clowd
And when fortune hath spitt oute all her gall
I trust good luck to me shalbe allowd.
For I have sene a shippe into haven fall
After the storme hath broke boeth mast and shrowd;
And eke the willowe that stowpeth with the wynde
Doeth ryse again, and greater wode doeth bynd.¹

Wyatt, closely following his source in Serafino, searches for a satisfactory metaphorical model: by grace of what force can the fallen one be restored?² In considering these various alternatives, the speaker tries to find a way to exert some influence over circumstances that have bereft him of control of his life. As long as the speaker continues to propose comparisons, he stresses the ways that falls are unlike deaths. Activity of the imagination is itself a kind of consolation for political frustration. The speaker's imagination is the most *active* force in the poem. The images he chooses depict survival as a passive activity: the sun's reemergence depends upon

*Jonathan Z. Kamholtz is in the English Department at the University of Cincinnati.

¹Kenneth Muir and Patricia Thomson, eds., *Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Liverpool: Liverpool Univ. Press, 1969), poem LX, p. 45. The text of all Wyatt poems is from the Muir-Thomson edition; subsequent references in the text will identify the poem by edition and roman numeral, e. g., M-T LX. The titles from Tottel are from Hyder Edward Rollins, ed., *Tottel's Miscellany (1557-1587)* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1928-9).

²Wyatt may have been drawn to Serafino's multiple alternatives, as in "Venemus Thorns" (M-T LXXVI)—part of the logical and rhetorical force Patricia Thomson sees as Wyatt's debt to Serafino. This essay—and any serious work on Wyatt—is much indebted to the full-length studies by Patricia Thomson, *Sir Thomas Wyatt and his Background* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1964) and Raymond Southall, *The Courtly Maker* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964).

the passing of the clouds, the ship must have luck befall it, and the willow "stowpeth." Yet only the willow, the speaker assures us, "doeth ryse"—although possibly in a different form, lending its strength to those who are greater: but it alone has specifically solved the problem of falling. Presumably by its very nature, it cannot help but be flexible. It is a worthy model for the courtier: it knows when to give.

Wyatt's political poetry is filled with ambiguity about the nature and identity of its heroes. The lyric begins "He is not ded," but by line four, it asserts "I trust good luck to me shalbe allowed." Muir-Thomson note that in the best manuscript, the Egerton, "I am not ded" has been altered in Wyatt's own hand to "He" (p. 312). Though Wyatt's alteration might be the rather obvious subterfuge of politically prudent disguise, the resulting confusion typifies larger problems in Wyatt's court poetry.³ Is Wyatt more concerned with the fall of Henry's great men, content to see himself as poet and observer while men like Cromwell and Wolsey pay for the risks they have taken, or is Wyatt concerned with his own political ups and downs, with himself as actor-victim? In choosing to retreat to the pose of an outsider ("For I have sene a shippe..."), Wyatt suggests that he prefers to be remembered as an observer, a mind that has visited the court and learned its lessons. In altering the manuscript's stoic—and possibly self-pitying—"I am not ded all though I had a fall" to "HE," Wyatt may also be obliquely transforming court politics into another phenomenon from which a shrewd observer—the speaker—can learn, as he did from observing the clouded sun, the battered ship and the bending willow. By alluding to the court but stepping back from it, Wyatt continues to pursue his quest for the still spot in the turning world where he might find quiet of mind.

The editor of Tottel's *Miscellany* printed the revised version ("He"), but adds a puzzling title: "The lover hopeth of better chance." The editor—the poem's earliest published interpreter and critic—has read the verse as a love lyric. But where is the erotic content?

We know that Tottel's editor altered and possibly warped many

³ Thomas A. Hannen notes that Wyatt's political verse is frequently "about the difficulty of achieving self-knowledge" in public situations. "The Humanism of Sir Thomas Wyatt" in *The Rhetoric of Renaissance Poetry from Wyatt to Milton*, Thomas O. Sloan and Raymond B. Waddington, eds. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1974), p. 39.

poems he printed (the regularization of the rhythm of "They fle from me" is the infamous example). Furthermore, the titles that Tottel's editor assigned the lyrics virtually created the persona of "the lover" through whose complaining lips we hear an enormous number of the anthologized lyrics. The very act of titling—asserting the presence of a speaker and frequently proposing moral *sententiae*—imposes some distortion on the courtly lyrics, as does the change from manuscript to printed word. The printed poem belongs to a different political context and a different literary tradition.⁴ Perhaps Tottel's editor hoped to infuse bourgeois married love with the high-mindedness and sexual sublimation of the courtly love ethos.

Nevertheless, the title suggests that to the sixteenth century ear, "He is not ded" *could* sound like an amatory poem. Though we should not preclude the possibility that the imagery of rising and falling refers indirectly to the flux of male sexual energy, it seems more likely that the political-amatory correspondence takes place on a more general level: the problems of political flux were seen as being applicable to the flux of love's fortunes as well. The poet then seeks safe harbor from the storms of love as well as those of political controversy and disgrace.

The evidence in Tottel suggests that the poem has a fundamentally dual significance. Courtly love achieves the status of a natural force—and of political forces. Perhaps "the lover" hopes that love places him beyond politics—or that he will fare at least as well as disgraced courtiers, hoping that the same consolations are available to the heartbroken as to the crestfallen. This reading would add new poignance to the female personification of fortune, and to the speaker's humbly passive suit when he deals with his own plight most directly: "I trust good luck to me shalbe allowed." Love and politics may be seen as complementary despotisms. Seeing both the political and erotic implications of the poem suggests the multiplicity of social obligations imposed upon the courtier poet: he can

⁴ Significant discussions of this can be found in J. W. Saunders, *The Profession of English Letters* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), pp. 31-67, and Edwin H. Miller, *The Professional Writer in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1959). More theoretical accounts are given in Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1962), and Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968), pp. 217-51.

be distant from the fall of others, and yet is destined to love and have to sue politely to a force as powerful and potentially hostile as *fortuna*.

Raymond Southall, in *The Courtly Maker*, insists that Wyatt's reader not overlook "the political aspect of the amorous complaint," and notes that the conventions of the courtly love lyric could "express the real character of courtly existence," where, he notes, "the pattern of personal relationships could be kaleidoscoped at any moment by the exigencies of national and international politics" (pp. 49, 25, 8). A review of the situation at court in the opening decades of the sixteenth century will help us understand the political world which Wyatt's love lyrics reflect and express.

Some of the anxieties of Wyatt's poetry may well reflect the political ambiguities that accompanied what has been called the Henrican revolution.⁵ During the Tudor years, England underwent a basic transition from a medieval state, held together by the static, contractual interpersonal relationships of feudal ties, towards a modern state, governed by more impersonal, bureaucratic and fluid bonds. Court attitudes and courtly art forms reflect the transition between these two systems.

The medieval, feudal court depended upon mutual, reciprocal agreements between king and aristocracy; each offered protection to the other. The key term in medieval government, notes G. R. Elton, is the "household," and service to the state centered around the court—which was the royal household—and service to the king's person (p. 19). Security, the goal of the feudal state servant, was attained by being granted a court office, affording the courtier a literal as well as a metaphorical place at court.

Around the turn of the sixteenth century, however, new constituencies sought and found ways to serve the king. Louis B. Wright has called the Tudor monarchy a "bourgeois dynasty" and historians generally agree that members of the increasingly influential middle class rose into positions of greater public importance than ever before—men like Wolsey, Cromwell, More and even Wyatt

⁵ A good general discussion of the policies and ideals of Henry's court may be found in G. R. Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1953). Also valuable is Wallace T. MacCaffrey, "Place and Patronage in Elizabethan Politics" in *Elizabethan Government and Society: Essays Presented to Sir John Neale*, S. T. Bindoff et al., eds. (London: Univ. of London Press, 1961), p. 104.

himself.⁶ Their loyalty was measured not merely by service to the king's person, but by serving the increasingly far-flung national and international network of laws and interests associated with the needs of a strong, centralized state.⁷ Authority was increasingly delegated, and managerial and administrative talents became vital. But with avenues of success open to larger numbers of people, the terrors that accompany competition become of greater concern: fallings follow risings, successful men displace the less successful, factionalism disrupts unity of purpose.

Henry VIII combined the personal authority of the king's medieval role with the legal authority of the modern state. The feudal system had been weakened by years of war and the rise of new sources of economic strength and influence. Thomson notes the increasing fictiveness of traditional medieval roles: "The master-servant link had, in fact, lost much of its feudal strength. At most, the master represented an intermediate loyalty between servant and state" (p. 52). In this context, decisions to perpetuate feudal roles become stronger statements about the need for archaic political ideals. Henry was fascinated by medieval culture and kept alive its formal network of symbolic actions, including jousts and state pageants which were a form of public courtly romance. G. R. Elton notes that Henry's own talents and interests were more towards the older system. Henry seems to have rebelled against the bureaucratic state he had helped to create, preferring to exercise personal pleasure over legal needs (pp. 67-71). England's Reformation was itself a curious mixture of assertion of feudal prerogatives and the consolidation of a modern, independent national state.

The transitional nature of the state is reflected in changes, anxieties and pressures on courtly art as well. Even the system of unpublished courtly amateurs whose poetry circulates in manuscript form is breaking down; nearly a century intervenes between Chaucer's death and the exposure of his poetry to a non-courtly audience, while Wyatt's poetry appears in print within fifteen years of his death.

⁶ Wright, *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England* (1935; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), p. 5. An important dissenting view may be found in Jack H. Hexter, *Reappraisals in History* (London: Longmans, 1961), pp. 71-116.

⁷ See Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy: 1558-1641* (Abridged Edition) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 5-36.

C. S. Lewis asks us to see Wyatt as a feudal court poet; he notes that a song by Wyatt

was not intended to be read. It has little meaning until it is sung in a room with many ladies present. The whole scene comes before us. The poet did not write for those who would sit down to *The Poetical Works of Wyatt*. We are having a little music after supper. In that atmosphere all the confessional or autobiographical tone of the songs falls away....⁸

Lewis reminds us that the ceremonial conversations of the courtly love lyric can be envisioned within the feudal context of household service. But Lewis treats rather unambiguously a role in which Wyatt often seems to feel uncomfortable. The artificer as medieval court servant is perhaps a fading ideal, a nostalgic indulgence, against which to measure the true tone of Wyatt's poetry. The bitterness of Wyatt's songs may not merely be a pose adopted towards ungracious ladies. Songs like "My lute, awake!" (M-T LXVI) and "My pen, take payn" (M-T CLXXIX) hint at an artistic mode on the verge of collapse, for they are lyrics which end symbolically in the silence of the court artist. Wyatt's poetry moves beyond the conventions of court satire and amatory complaint to examine the difficulty he feels in transmitting his words in the sort of context Lewis describes.

Wyatt's love poetry reflects the ambiguity of functioning in a transitional state. Wyatt writes about both the courtly love situation, which depends upon a system of lovers with clear if frustrating hierarchical places, and the Petrarchan love situation, which depicts the lover without an authentic, natural place, thrown back upon, and within, himself. Wyatt complains about the oppressive rigidity of the courtly love setting with its accretion of traditional and restrictive understandings. Yet he equally fears the "newfangelnes" of the second, where lovers serve no system but themselves and their egos. Love is subjected to an unprecedented series of rises and falls. Wyatt sees himself as caught between the oppressions of stasis and the oppressions of change. Through it all, Wyatt seems to be searching

⁸ Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 230. There is an interesting related discussion in H. A. Mason, *Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Period: An Essay* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), pp. 164-65, 172-73.

for a harbor—for a place at court and a place in the heart, where a truce can be called to the warring competitions between individuals set free from the traditional feudal and courtly roles. In doing so, he wants to be part of a system that he can see is becoming weaker and weaker. Wyatt suggests that contemporary politician and contemporary lover share a common frame of mind: both lack, but need, a place.

The domestication of the Petrarchan paradox offered the early Renaissance poet a shorthand way of describing states of mind to which no known natural state corresponded. Love's freezing fires and burning rains can only be felt by men out of harmony with their world. Nature cannot cure the lover, or suggest a way for him to express himself, so he turns within. Only internally can the lover regain control over his situation, for the imagination, as Sidney was to argue, does not disdain to be bound by the limits of fallen nature's laws.

Wyatt's adaptation of Petrarch's *Rime* cii, "Caesar, when that the traytour of Egipt" (M-T III), explores the relationship between the paradoxical states of mind of the politician and the lover. We do not expect great men or political heroes to express themselves plainly:

CAESAR, when that the traytour of Egipt
 With th'onourale hed did him present
 Covering his gladness did represent
 Playnt with his teeres owteward, as it is writt:
 And Hannyball eke, when fortune him shitt
 Clene from his reign and from all his intent,
 Laught to his folke whome sorrowe did torment,
 His cruell dispite for to disgorge and qwit.

Men who have a political role to play may have to divorce, for reasons of policy, their public selves from their private ones. They either hide or redirect the passions that demand expression.

Tottel's editor entitles the poem "Of others fained sorrow, and the lovers fained mirth." While Muir-Thomson warn that the poem does not need to be read as a love poem (p. 264), the sonnet's sestet seems to focus on amatory, not political, experiences:

So chaunceth it oft that every passion
 The mynde hideth by colour contrary
 With fayned visage, now sad, now mery:
 Whereby, if I laught, any tyme, or season

It is for bicause I have nother way
To cloke my care but vnder spoort and play.⁹

In the public world, all passions are masked, but the poet's concern focuses only on the falseness of his expressions of joy. The sonnet is richest when read in a dual context. The sestet shows the poet anchoring the paradoxical style of his love in history, as well as in his emotions; the poet appropriates the unchanging exemplars of history to his argument about love. He has found models in the political world for love's "disdaynfull dowblenes" (M-T V). In so doing, he changes the status of the lover, giving the lover a new, if only partial, heroism: the lover is like a fragmented public hero—more like the conquered Hannibal, however, than the conquering Caesar in that his misery, rather than his mirth is being concealed.

The *Miscellany* title also suggests that this alliance with the past is accompanied by alienation from the present: "others" feel one way, the lover feels another. The title helps call to mind the competitive stance Wyatt so often adopts toward his fellow courtiers: the audience Wyatt tends to address remains an undifferentiated mass of male consciousness from whom he has detached himself (rather than, say, his friends at court). The alienation also suggests the continuing English Renaissance lyric drama between public calling and private pain. This receives expression in a line of courtier poems that extends from Wyatt's "Ffarewel, Love, and all thy lawes for ever" (M-T XIII) to Sidney's "Your words my friend" or "Having this day my horse" (*Astrophil and Stella* XXI and XLI). The conflict between the courtier's ambition to be absorbed into the public world and the lover's inability to express himself in publicly useful ways finds form in the deflected feudal imagery of such poems as "The longe love" (M-T IV).

These poems also reflect changes in the traditional expectations of the courtier. Under a feudal system, a young man's public duty was primarily military in nature. But as David Bevington notes:

In its battle against maintenance and feudal autonomy, the Tudor monarchy introduced new criteria for political success in England. No longer supreme was the military warlord with his chivalrous pursuits....¹⁰

⁹ While M-T argue for the occasional nature of the poem, Wyatt has explicitly denied the particularity of the occasion: "if I laught, *any* tyme, or season."

¹⁰ Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), p. 42.

The courtier's new duties were more literate—and even literary. These poems thus complain against a betrayal of political expectations in a transitional state. "The furyous gonne" (M-T LXI)—another poem which Tottel's editor takes to be a drama about "the lover"—can be read in terms of the courtier's fear that love has caused him to betray his calling as a public warrior.

THE furyous gonne in his raijing yre,
 When that the bowle is rammed in to sore,
 And that the flame cannot part from the fire,
 Cracketh in sonder, and in the ayre doeth rore
 The shevered peces; right so doeth my desire
 Whose flame encreseth from more to more,
 Wych to let owt I dare not loke nor speke:
 So now hard force my hert doeth all to breke.

Love is blocking the traditional public avenues of young men towards success. The lover is left only with self-destructive inner warfare as a way to release the latent violence of his ambitions—and the violence locked in the experience and language of love.

Wyatt sees both love and politics as a constant process of slipping and falling. He seeks a common goal in both: the desire to stand, to find independent footing. Raymond Southall notes that "experience for Wyatt is a continual search for stability within instability, for a point of rest within a restless world..." (p. 77). This stability is frequently pictured in terms of flexibility, mask and pretense, as well as stoic self-assertion and rigidity; the resolution of "He is not ded," after all, was that a man can do worse than to be like the willow and rise with others, binding the "greater wode" which could not bend.

A similar image of the poet seeking a way to stand appears in M-T CCXXXVI:

THE piller pearisht is whearto I Lent
 The strongest staye of myne vnquyet mynde;
 The lyke of it no man agayne can fynde
 From East to west still seking though he went...

Muir-Thomson note that "modern scholars have not followed T[ottel] in labelling this a love poem" (p. 430). They stress the biographical nature of the poem as a response to the falls that threaten public life, especially Wyatt's emotional reaction to the execution of his patron Cromwell and Wyatt's own subsequent in-

carcerations.¹¹ And clearly the poem *is* occasional, but like most occasional poems, it reveals more about the speaker than about his subject. In entitling the sonnet "The lover laments the death of his love," Tottel's editor may have been reading the poem against the background of its Petrarchan original, which doubly lamented the losses of both patron and lover (Laura). Moreover, the reading implied in Tottel may suggest the intensity of the bond between courtier and patron; some public ties *are* private ties as well, just as some forms of public favor—especially those associated with the personal ties of feudalism—can be expressions of love.

While the poem's primary concern with grim political reality seems to have absorbed the amatory aspects of the lyric, Tottel's editor may also have responded to the general similarity of the terms of political and erotic mourning. In both types of poem, Wyatt is torn between dependence and independence—between leaning and standing. In both, the weakness of the individual is compensated for by union with others. Both types of poem depict the restless "unquyet mynde" seeking stability; both types depict the intangible spirit questing for something tangible to rest on.

Muir-Thomson points out that Wyatt has altered the Petrarchan original by focusing the last six lines upon his self-hatred and possible guilt. Perhaps Wyatt has replaced his mourning for a lost love with mourning for himself:

But syns that thus it is by destenye
 What can I more but have a wofull hart,
 My penne in playnt, my voyce in wofull crye,
 My mynde in woe, my bodye full of smart,
 And I my self my self alwayes to hate
 Till dreadfull death do ease my dolefull state?

Both love and mourning turn the mind inward. Wyatt depicts the kind of self-conscious, divided self that produces the world of paradox: "I my self my self alwayes to hate." The themes of love and politics both produce a sense of doubleness, of dual selves; the unstable mind is the result of the unstable self, shaken by the fear that all around it is falling.¹²

¹¹ There is a detailed account of this episode in Wyatt's life in Masor, pp. 195-98.

¹² Recent articles by Donald M. Friedman have focused upon the mental world of Wyatt's poems; note especially his "The Mind in the Poem: Wyatt's 'They Fle From Me,'" *SEL* 7 (1967), 1-13.

The political form of Wyatt's fear of slipping and falling is expressed in Wyatt's adaptation of Seneca, "Stond who so list upon the Slipper toppe/Of courtes estates..." (M-T CCXL). The speaker sees himself looking on while others await their imminent fall.¹³ (The fear of falling probably held a special poignance for Wyatt who, as a courtier with middle-class roots, had gotten where he was by rising. Surrey, who was to the manner born, looked upon his misfortunes differently.) Tottel's editor prints an altered version, locating the courtiers on Fortune's "slipper whele." The text of the Arundel manuscript suggests that the place itself, not the machinery of fate, is slippery. Wyatt poses frequently as one who is literally out of place: he is removed, looking out, withdrawn to find some place stabler and more quiet, as he does in "Myne owne John Poyntz" (M-T CV)—even though the place is an exile or prison as often as it is a true harbor.

The language of falling pervades Wyatt's love poetry as well as his political poetry. When Wyatt bids "Ffarewell, Love, and all thy lawes for ever" (M-T XIII), it is because he "lusteth no lenger rotten boughes to clyme." Love's laws create an insecure place from which the poet might someday fall. One can fall from love despite the faithfulness of one's service, as in "My pen, take payn" (M-T CLXXIX), where the poet asks "Wherefore/To hold so fast and yet to ffall?" In "It may be good, like it who list" (M-T XXI), the poet argues that the paradoxical state of mind itself creates an inherently unstable floor through which to fall:

Alas! I tred an endles maze
That seketh to accorde two contraries;
And hope still, and nothing hase,
Imprisoned in libertes,
As oon unhard and still that cries;
Alwaies thursty and yet nothing I tast:
For dred to fall I stond not fast.

The need to stand and the fear to fall: the poet's private life and public life are brought together by a common language. Wyatt seeks the secure place but finds only pitfalls.

Love and the state both try to subject the courtier to authority. While Wyatt might be willing to be bound by court hierarchy and

¹³ Strong readings of this poem can be found in Hannen, p. 39, and Mason, pp. 182-85.

by "lovers laws" (M-T CCXIV), the laws of neither are plain or immutable. Both offer ways to ascend into favor, but the avenues are insecure and the perches gained are brittle. Wyatt seeks what Shakespeare's Ulysses, in his speech on order in *Troilus and Cressida*, called an "authentic place"—a place he may securely occupy in both a woman's heart and the world of court service. Wyatt pictures himself as being helpless in the face of political and sexual authority, but those authorities are in turn helpless to create stable order in their world. They are unable to serve those who serve them. Wyatt aspires to both types of preferment because they promise stability; but both are themselves unstable, constantly evolving new rules and creating new favorites. Both authorities are strong because of the intangible (or paradoxical) obligations they impose upon the speaker; both are weak because they can provide no tangible place or harbor for him. In consequence, Wyatt's standing in court and in love feels intangible, while his ensuing fall seems quite tangible.

Wyatt chooses to see himself as a reasoning man in an unreasonable world. Several of his lyrics counterpoint the stalemate of illogic with a brief climactic note of logic:

I FYNDE no peace and all my warr is done;
 I fere and hope I burne and freise like yse;
 I fley above the wynde yet can I not arrise;
 And noght I have and all the worold I seson. . .
 Withoute Iyen, I se; and withoute tong I plain;
 I desire to perisse and yet I aske helthe;
 I love an othre and thus I hate my self;
 I fede me in sorrowe and laugh in all my pain;
 Likewise displeaseth me boeth deth and lyffe;
 And my delite is causer of this stryff.

(M-T XXVI)

With "thus," the poet imposes momentary control over his situation, without of course resolving the internalized paradoxes from which many Petrarchan lyrics derive their energy. In "What worde is this" (M-T L), Wyatt tries to solve the problem of the illogic and instability of love by finding a word that will not slide:

WHAT wourde is that that chaungeth not,
 Though it be tourned and made in twain?
 It is myn aunswer, god it wot,

And eke the causer of my payn.
 A love rewardeth with disdain,
 Yet is it loved. What would ye more?
 It is my helth eke and my sore.

The poem's energy comes from its mixture of stability and paradox. Wyatt's riddle creates a world of paradox for which he hopes to find an "aunswer" in a word that cannot be changed, no matter how it is assaulted by experience and intellectual ingenuity.

The "aunswer," of course, has traditionally been given as "Anna," and the poem is probably correctly read as one of Wyatt's poems to Anne Boleyn.¹⁴ Tottel's editor, who characteristically prefers reason to paradox, agrees; he prints the third line as "It is mine Anna" and entitles the poem "Of his love called Anna"—thus overemphasizing the solution to the experiential and linguistic riddle. The editor is unable to abide Wyatt's question: "What would ye more?" Wyatt's interest is in *posing* the riddle; unresolvable paradoxes have more weight than their elusive resolutions. He searches for the plain word, and the plain love, but falls short of finding them.

There is a political dimension to love's paradoxes and ciphers in this case as well. In so far as the poem is addressed to Anne Boleyn, Wyatt's love is literally as unutterable as it is unfulfillable. The poet's choice of partial articulateness reflects political pressures. Numerous opaque legends have survived about Henry's jealousy of Wyatt; competition for this love was unthinkable. In noting that love could be "a form of social rebellion," and hence dangerous, Southall notes that "impolitic love, therefore, may be defined as real affection when opposed to the political order of degrees and estates" (p. 24). Prudence in dangerous situations could force the courtier-lover to speak in ciphers.¹⁵ Part of the drama of the poem resides in Wyatt's quest for a forbidden word to express a still more forbidden experience. This complicates our reading of Wyatt's intentions and themes. As both courtly and Petrarchan lover, Wyatt

¹⁴ Thomson discusses the relationship between Wyatt and Anne on pp. 18-45, and mentions the possibility of Anne's having written a riddling reply to this poem. Tottel printed a number of other riddling name poems, including "Of his love named White" and "Deserts of Nymphs," an acrostic.

¹⁵ Hannen notes that Henry's court "was a place of deadly serious intrigue where each faction plotted against every other for royal favor. Behind the artificial frivolity and the macabre mask of charm, every work or deed was weighed for the information it could yield..." (p. 43).

would be expected to transform his attachment to others into internal stress. Tottel's emendation is thus considerably less perceptive than Wyatt's own vision of his situation: the correct answer is not the plain word but the paradox, not "Anna" but "It is my helth eke and my sore."

In "Who so list to hounte" (M-T VII), the speaker seeks to create stability and plainness for himself in a world that offers him only instability, paradox, uncertainty, exhaustion and danger. The poem depicts a moment at which the poet's sense of alienation from both court and love first becomes self-conscious and receives articulation. It revolves around an episode of political and sexual self-discovery. The sonnet suggests the kinds of burdens that the courtier's life places upon citizens of Henry's court, reminding the speaker that the fictions of neither courtly love nor Petrarchan love are experienced in a political vacuum.

The sonnet is another of Wyatt's "whoso" poems: one man at court is speaking to a faceless group of others. The poem is filled with reminders that love is a public, not a private, pursuit; the "I" and "thou" of the love unit is cluttered with the presence of others—those "who" are addressed, the group "of them" with whom the poet shares his plight, and, of course, the implied presence of Caesar.

WHO SO list to hounte I know where is an hynde;
But as for me, *helas*, I may no more:
The wayne travaill hath weryed me so sore,
I ame of them that farthest cometh behinde....

In the second quatrain, he hints at his paradoxical situation: his mind, as well as his body, has become involved in love, for his mind becomes the wounding arrow. Yet it is the hunter who staggers as if wounded; the experience that seeks to go outward rebounds inwardly.

Yet may I by no meanes my weryed mynde
Drawe from the Diere: but as she fleeth afore
Faynting I folowe; I leve of therefore,
Sithens in a nett I seke to hold the wynde.

The resolution proposed is related to that of "I fynde no peace"—the speaker wishes to impose logic on his situation and presumably reassert his mind's control over his life (with the strong "therefore"). The speaker seeks to harness the resolving power of received, traditional language, and offers a proverbial explanation: "In a nett I

seke to hold the wynde." Having extricated himself from vain seeking (another characteristic pose), and having found a verbal and even a natural excuse (the image of the wind) to leave off, the poem's personal drama ought to end here.

But the speaker remains haunted by his experience. Petrarch's dream is Wyatt's nightmare. He is dissatisfied with his proverbial solution; as in "Satire III," Wyatt finds the plainness of commonplace to be inconclusive. The sestet reopens the case with almost the same formulation as the octet: "Who list her hount."

Who list her hount I put him owte of dowbte,
 As well as I may spend his tyme in vain;
 And graven with Diamondes in letters plain
 There is written her faier neck rounde abowte:
 'Noli me tangere for Cesars I ame,
 And wylde for to hold though I seme tame'.

The sestet proposes an alternate explanation, one that will put its audience "owte of dowbte" and whose meaning is "plain."

The message he finds is, of course, not at all plain. In Petrarch's version, the collar explained that certain deer were still protected by Caesar even though they had been set free: Caesar's I was, not "for Cesars I ame." The message around her neck describes the complex interplay between obedience due to wordly and other-worldly rulers. The motto is composed of a conflation of the Gospels: John's touch me not, for I have not yet ascended, and Mark's and Luke's render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. The final two lines thus offer three possibly distinct reasons for the speaker's failure to hold his love: this beauty is other-worldly and belongs to no one (as in Petrarch's vision); this beauty has already been claimed by Caesar, one who is far more powerful than the speaker; this beauty is a wild thing of nature which no one captures. Stay back, stay back, stay back.

Critical interest has focused upon the middle message, the warning from wordly Caesar, who is usually seen as Henry pursuing his deer, Anne Boleyn, a reading I accept.¹⁶ The poem thus fulfills our dual expectations of Henry's court, filled with hints of wondrous love and despotic terror. The pun on "graven" suggests both the glories of courtly artistic wealth and the morbidity of the tomb. The passive construction ("There is written"), of course, enables

¹⁶ M-T summarize the scholarly positions on p. 267.

us to read the message as having been written by Anne as well. She warns the speaker to note the distinction between appearance and being, exposing the gap between "I ame" and "I seme." This gap was not an issue in the Petrarchan original, where the hind was a vision from start to finish.¹⁷

If, however, we choose to read the message as coming from Henry, the poem becomes more revealing about the relationship between Tudor love and politics. Lovers keep their physical distance because they sublimate their courtly passions, but also because of their obedience to King and state. The lover's alienation affirms the traditional social order and defuses his potential competition and rebellion. He must show reverence for Caesar as well as for the lady. Courtly love engenders a variety of conflicting and overlapping loyalties. The graven collar announces that the woman is the true servant of Caesar; the lover's alienation testifies that he too must primarily be Caesar's servant rather than Anne's.

The poem is about physical space as well as a frame of mind. The poem literally presents a speaker addressing his audience about a place ("I know where is an hynde") where they may see what he has seen. The poem depicts love that has left the ordered confines of the court for the forest wilderness, and in doing so, has lost its bearings. Wandering exhaustedly, the poet discovers that he has no authentic place. His search for a safe harbor has failed and he becomes like Wyatt's friend, Bryan, restless and rootless. The speaker's dreadful experience in the woods is augmented by the horror of court life, which has followed him into the forest: he both seeks endlessly and endlessly falls ("Faynting I folowe").

In the sestet, the message on the collar modifies the images that might explain the speaker's failure. While he wanted to think in terms of having sought "to hold the wynde," the collar reminds him that he cannot touch her because she is "wylde for to hold thogh I seme tame." Wind is always wild and belongs to no one. But animals that are wild can be made tame, and tame animals can revert back to their wild state (as they do in "They fle from me"). In seeing Anne not as the "wynde" but as something "wylde," Wyatt reminds us that the human order can influence the natural order. This manipulation is the essence of societies, political systems and the arts. As we have seen in "He is not ded," poets use metaphors to imaginatively manipulate nature. So do kings.

¹⁷ In concluding his remarks on this poem, Mason argues that "Petrarch's moral world is mediaeval while Wyatt's is Humanist and modern" (p. 190).

This interference in the natural order is a crucial element in considering the relationship between politics and love in Wyatt's lyrics. The Tudor court enclosed a world of symbol makers. "Who so list to hounte" describes the speaker's experience of coming across a symbol that he did not himself create: he has encountered another's metaphor. Part of the poem's impact comes from the speaker's implied discovery that love poetry is not the only means to impose symbolic values on events. Political power creates symbols as well.

Wyatt searches to find through love acceptable images to express his mind's quest for quiet and stability. Sometimes he finds other seekers—other courtly makers—instead. Perhaps Wyatt uses the example of the political powers of King and court to illustrate a general problem of the sixteenth century love poet: there are limits to the extent to which the artist can impose his reason and imagination upon another. There are rival quests to offer explanations for the human mystery. The poet's may be more haunting and even more persuasive, but the King's has more power and takes precedence. The interplay between love and politics in Wyatt's poetry demonstrates some limits to the poet's power to define his world. It is part of Wyatt's continuing struggle to try to see things in a stable way in a world where no one will let him do so.

JACQUELINE T. MILLER •

The Imperfect Tale: Articulation, Rhetoric, and Self in "Caleb Williams"

Recent criticism of *Caleb Williams* generally concentrates on the theme of mastery and victimization, placing it in political, psychological, or theological contexts.¹ These studies provide useful perspectives, but Godwin himself extended this concept of authority and oppression to include the domain of language and aesthetics, and it is here that we can locate a crucial but largely ignored dimension of the novel. From the book emerges an idea of language

* Jacqueline T. Miller is a doctoral candidate in English at The Johns Hopkins University.

¹ For the political viewpoint see, for example, Harvey Gross, "The Pursuer and the Pursued: A Study of *Caleb Williams*," *TSSL*, 1 (1959), 401-11; D. Gilbert Dumas, "Things As They Were: The Original Ending of *Caleb Williams*," *SEL*, 6 (1966), 575-97. For examples of the psychological see Patrick Cruttwell, "On *Caleb Williams*," *Hudson Review*, 11 (1958), 87-95; Rudolf Storch, "Metaphors of Private Guilt and Social Rebellion in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*," *ELH*, 34 (1967), 188-207. For the theological, see Joel Porte, "In the Hands of an Angry God: Religious Terror in Gothic Fiction" in *The Gothic Imagination: Essays in Dark Romanticism*, ed. G. R. Thompson (Pullman, Washington: Washington State Univ. Press, 1974). Some critics have tried to merge several of these approaches under the heading of "moral philosophy": see Eric Rothstein, "Allusion and Analogy in the Romance of *Caleb Williams*," *UTQ*, 37 (1967-68), 18-30; and Mitzi Myers' fine study, "Godwin's Changing Conception of *Caleb Williams*," *SEL*, 12 (1972), 591-628. A recent essay which came to my attention after completion of this article, James Walton's "'Mad Feary Father': *Caleb Williams* and the Novel Form," *Salzburg Studies in English Literature*, Romantic Reassessment Series, No. 47 (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache, 1975), 1-61, confronts some of the issues I intend to explore. Concerned primarily with the connection between "individualism and the novel form" (11) and their social and cultural contingencies, Walton perceptively discusses the analogy of the hero/heroine as novelist (4, 35) and of the story as potent weapon of self-preservation (36, 42). However, Walton's point is that the pen does unsuccessful battle with (in an attempt to reject) the "external world" (44), with what Godwin considered "the principle of reality itself" (3), with "things as they are"; whereas I will argue that for Godwin, both in the novel and in his essays, "things as they are" are themselves linguistic constructs, governed by the true artist whose powerful rhetoric shapes not only the individual but the world he confronts as well.

that equates words and things, defining the self and the world as basically linguistic constructs which are shaped, manipulated and controlled by those who possess the most powerful and persuasive language.² In this paper I intend to examine the theory of language proposed in Godwin's essays, and then to explore the ways in which the principles of that theory inform the novel. For *Caleb Williams* is the "imperfect and mutilated story"³ of a man who cannot speak his own words and who thereby fails to "bring into being what he really is."⁴ It is the history of a man whose problems with language defeat his attempts to impose his formulation of "things as they are"⁵ onto a world that has been organized by the principles of another man's rhetoric.

Caleb is writing his memoirs, and he does so for reasons that suggest not only that individual identity is realized in and through language, but also that in a world structured by language, the words that form the individual identity must, in order to survive, help shape a world which supports them. Caleb's motivations for constructing his narrative, as he frequently presents them, are two-fold. He wants to review his history to escape from the consciousness of his present condition, "to divert my mind from the deplorableness of my situation" (3). He also writes with the hope of "vindicating my character" to a world he assumes will be able to accommodate his story: "I conceived that my story faithfully digested would carry in it an impression of truth that few men would be able to resist" (303-04). The first reason suggests that Caleb is doing more than merely recording events; since his return to the past is motivated by a desire to avoid the present, his writing may be seen as an

² This concept undoubtedly reflects the influence of contemporary views. See, for example, Gerald Bruns' *Modern Poetry and the Idea of Language* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1974), where he describes the "romantic" idea of language that emerged during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as one which insists upon the correspondence, almost the identity, of language, the "human interior," and man's world as well, which is "fundamentally linguistic in character" (p. 66).

³ *Caleb Williams*, ed. David McCracken (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 306. All further references to this edition will be cited parenthetically within the text.

⁴ I borrow this phrase from Robert Kiely's discussion of the novel in *The Romantic Novel in England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972), p. 96.

⁵ *Things As They Are* appeared alternately as title and as subtitle of the novel in different early editions.

endeavor to recreate (rather than simply retrace) a history from which can emerge a new character in a new context. For as he repeatedly admits, Falkland has been the "author" of Caleb's life, and Caleb's own efforts to be the author of his own history and identity have been impotent. He has been so unlike his prison friend, the admirable Brightwell, in that he "cannot pretend to rival the originality and self-created vigour of his mind" (192). Caleb recognizes the self-creative power of language and of the artist that Tyrell often denies; he attempts in his memoirs to engage in the activity that Tyrell rejects when he says:

I am neither a philosopher nor a poet, to set out upon a wild-goose chase of making myself a different man from what you find me. (30)

It is precisely in order to make himself "a different man from what you find me" that Caleb writes. His endeavor to create rather than report and record is suggested by the gradual change of his attitude towards his memoirs. When he has brought his story up to the present and finds himself in the same condition as when he began to construct his history, then "writing, which was at first a pleasure, is changed into a burthen" (304). The narrative apparently has not served its purpose.

Caleb's desire to vindicate his character indicates a similar attempt to create, control and possess his own identity through his narrative. Caleb must become his own artist and write his own story to replace the universally accepted "odious and atrocious falshood that had been invented against me, to follow me wherever I went, to strip me of character" (301). But this ambition also reveals that speech alone is not effective; words, even self-articulated ones, must be impressed upon a world that will both confirm and conform to them. Caleb at times blames his fate not on his inability to express himself, but, instead, on the world's response (resistance) to his expression:

I was destined to suffer an early and inexorable death from the hands of others, because none of them had penetration enough to distinguish from falshood what I uttered with the entire conviction of a full fraught heart! Strange, that men from age to age should consent to hold their lives at the breath of another.... (210)

To successfully bring himself into being, to be the "creative poet of his own history,"⁶ Caleb's words must be uttered to a world which adapts to their formulations. Caleb learns that the vindication of his character cannot be achieved in isolation, and he understands that his words must be both given and returned, spoken and imposed upon a world which will hear, accept and reciprocate them:

I endeavoured to sustain myself by the sense of my integrity, but the voice of no man upon earth echoed to the voice of my conscience. 'I called aloud; but there was none to answer; there was none that regarded.' To me the whole world was as unhearing as the tempest.... (308)

By the end of the novel, however, Caleb's sense of self and claims to authorship crumble, and he admits that "I have now no character that I wish to vindicate" (326). His endeavor to become and assert himself through the language of his narrative fails; the moment "pregnant with fate" when Caleb triumphantly decides "I will tell a tale—! The justice of the country shall hear me! The elements of nature in universal uproar shall not interrupt me!" (314) produces only a "half-told and mangled tale" (326) that denies the full and complete creation of its author.

I

A letter from Coleridge dated 22 September 1800, only six years after the publication of *Caleb Williams*, attests to and encourages Godwin's concern with the relationships among language, the individual and the world:

I wish you to write a book on the power of the words, and the processes by which the human feelings form affinities with them.... In something of this sort I would endeavour to destroy the old antithesis of Words and Things; elevating, as it were, Words into Things, and living things too.⁷

In writing to Godwin of "the power of the words," Coleridge would have found a receptive audience; Godwin's interest in the politics of language is amply demonstrated both in his fiction and

⁶Rothstein, "Allusion and Analogy," 21.

⁷Coleridge, quoted in *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, ed. Charles Kegan Paul (Boston: Roberts Bros., 1876), II, 10-11.

his non-fictional writing. As noted above, the dynamics of mastery and victimization that frequently form the basis of political, psychological or theological explications of *Caleb Williams* also provide Godwin with an appropriate context for examining and describing his theory of language. In his two books of essays, *The Enquirer* and *Thoughts on Man*,⁸ Godwin discusses the importance of studying the "art of language," for without this knowledge and skill, man not only loses control of his words; he also loses command of himself and "will probably always remain in some degree the slave of language."⁹ The man who has acquired ability in this "science of words" will be able to reverse the hierarchy: "Language is not his master, but he is the master of language."¹⁰ Language, then, is a means of power, self-control and self-actualization. Skill or lack of skill in the science of words is a factor determining an individual's freedom or victimization, his self-possession and self-command, as well as his ability to effectively realize himself and his conceptions in the eyes of the world.

Godwin subscribes to the idea that language confers upon us our human identity: "that articulated air, which we denominate speech" is what "so eminently distinguishes us from the rest of animal creation."¹¹ Words, however, do more than differentiate men from beasts; they also differentiate the individual from other men. Godwin explicitly connects the ability to articulate with the assertion of the independence, identity and dignity of the self:

Man can never appear in his genuine dignity, but so far as he is capable of standing alone....

...He should begin to stand by himself, and respect his own dignity, as soon as he is able to utter an articulate sound.¹²

Words both proclaim and create individuality. For the true artist, language becomes inseparable from the self; to deprive him of his words is to destroy the man:

⁸ All quotations are from the following editions: *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature* (London, 1797), and *Thoughts on Man: His Nature, Productions, and Discoveries* (London, 1831).

⁹ Godwin, "Of the Study of the Classics" in *The Enquirer*, p. 43. Although Godwin makes these statements while speaking specifically of the need to learn more than one language, the essay places this in the more general context of its discussion of the importance of learning the "art of language."

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹¹ Godwin, "Of Imitation and Invention" in *Thoughts on Man*, p. 183.

¹² Godwin, "Of Choice in Reading" in *The Enquirer*, pp. 142-43.

The very words that occurred to these men...are part of themselves; and you may as well attempt to preserve the man when you have deprived him of all his members, as think to preserve the poet when you have taken away the words that he spoke.¹³

Each man's language is a personal statement of his identity, an inherent and vital part of himself. Practice does not always conform to theory, though, and Godwin does, at some points, question man's *capacity* for the self-generated articulation which forms the self ("Yet what is human speech for the most part, but mere imitation?...a servile repetition"), and suggests instead that "our tempers are merely the work of the transcriber." Ultimately, however, he rejects this proposal. Men may often tend merely to accept and pronounce the words of another, but they do have different options; they are not forced to participate in an unending series of repetitions thrust upon them by what others have spoken:

It is the mistake of dull minds only, to suppose...that we... have no alternative left, but either to be silent, or to say over and over again, what has been well said already.¹⁴

Godwin considers language to be not only inseparable from the self, but also intrinsic to perception and comprehension. Words shape, rather than simply reflect, man's understanding; they are the source, not the product, of human conceptions. Godwin repeats, in various essays, the maxim that

[a man] does not write because he understands the subject, but he understands the subject because he has written.¹⁵

Language is thus indispensable to thought and productive of meaning for each individual ("the science of thinking...is little else than the science of words"¹⁶). Godwin ventures even further to explain that one man's words can shape and form the understanding of others as well. Since words are "part and parcel of all our propositions and theories," man can, through language, form his thoughts and principles "into a regular system" which can then be "communicated to

¹³ Godwin, "Of Imitation and Invention," p. 204.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 183-84, 196.

¹⁵ Godwin, "Of the Sources of Genius" in *The Enquirer*, p. 27; see also "Of Intellectual Abortion" in *Thoughts on Man*, p. 64.

¹⁶ Godwin, "Of the Study of the Classics," p. 47.

others."¹⁷ Through words, a man can impose meaning—that is, an individual interpretation—on his subject. The artist shapes the world; he

changes the nature of what he handles... The manufacture he delivers to us is so new, that the thing it previously was, is no longer recognizable. The impression that he makes upon the imagination and the heart, the impulses that he communicates to the understanding and the moral feeling, are all his own.¹⁸

The artist, then, or the person who controls words, can control our conception of "things as they are." The man deficient in the "science of words" is thus truly the slave of language, capable only of a "servile repetition"; if his own speech is impotent and lacking the self-creative and world-creative energy potentially available in words, then he will be subject to the shaping principles of a more powerful rhetoric. This is, in part, the story of Caleb Williams—a man who never succeeds in becoming his own author.

II

Caleb's initial relationship to Falkland is one which is never truly dissolved. Caleb is Falkland's "secretary" (5), and his employment

consisted partly in the transcribing and arranging certain papers, and partly in writing from my master's dictation letters of business, as well as sketches of literary composition. Many of these latter consisted of an analytical survey of the plans of different authors, and conjectural speculations upon hints they afforded, tending either to the detection of their errors or the carrying forward their discoveries.

(6)

Thus Falkland, well studied in the art of authorship, will later be capable of having "forged the basest and most atrocious falsehoods, and urged them with a seriousness and perseverance which produced universal belief" (287). Falkland's control over Caleb and his language, and Caleb's own impotence as author both begin and are prefigured here; by "dictation," Falkland becomes the origin and source of the words that Caleb merely reproduces and copies.

¹⁷ Godwin, "Of Intellectual Abortion," p. 65.

¹⁸ Godwin, "Of Imitation and Invention," p. 201.

Throughout his story, all of Caleb's attempts at creation trap him into forms of repetition and impersonation. Later, for example, we learn of Caleb's "facility in the art of imitation" (238) and his "talent of mimicry" (254). When Caleb becomes a writer through the proxy of Mrs. Marney, we find him again confronted and complying with a "literary dictator" (259). His poems are rejected and he then resorts to copying the work of other authors: he "attempted a paper in the style of Addison's Spectators" and "translated or modelled [his] narratives upon a reading of some years before" (259). Ultimately the hopeful author discovers that he has become the subject in another man's literary production; "The Wonderful and Surprising History of Caleb Williams" becomes the final vehicle by which Caleb is stripped of his character and created anew.

In Volume One of the novel, Caleb relates Collins' story of Falkland's past; it is, in part, a catalogue of incidents illustrating verbal ascendancy and dependency—a history of relationships and events formed and defined by hierarchies of eloquence, culminating with a final picture of Falkland as a man with superior abilities in the art of language. Control of language becomes synonymous with control of self and control of others; if that ability is lost or overcome, men become subjected to the authority of those who retain verbal prowess. Falkland's return to England as a refined squire begins his confrontation with Tyrell, a local, uneducated man whose "proficiency...in the arts of writing and reading was extremely slender," but who was endowed with a "considerable copiousness of speech" (17-18) and a "boisterous and overbearing elocution" (20). This mode of articulation grants him power over his neighbors, for "the tyranny of Mr. Tyrell would not have been so patiently endured, had not his colloquial accomplishments perpetually come in aid of that authority which his rank and prowess originally obtained" (18). Falkland, however, obtains the admiration of the public through his "delicacy of sentiment and expression" (20) which creates such a contrast to the more vulgar Tyrell. Tyrell is cognizant of Falkland's verbal power, and even defines the politics of their dispute with reference to the techniques and efficacy of their personal rhetorics:

Time was when I was thought entitled to respect. But now, debauched by this Frenchified rascal, they call me rude, surly, a tyrant! It is true that I cannot talk in finical phrases,

flatter people with hypocritical praise, or suppress the real feelings of my mind! The scoundrel knows his pitiful advantages, and insults me upon them without ceasing.

(54)

Although Tyrell recognizes Falkland's superiority in this realm of "talk," he consoles himself by denying the value and power of words:

We knew well enough that [Falkland] had the gift of the gab. To be sure, if the world were to be governed by words, he would be in the right box. Oh, yes, he had it all hollow! But what signifies prating? Business must be done in an other-guess way than that. (31)

Despite Tyrell's statement to the contrary, however, the world does indeed seem to be "governed by words." The corrective to Tyrell's contention is supplied by the figure of Mr. Clare, the poet, who is the most admirable character in Collins' story: the true artist, it seems, is the ideal man. His use of language is exemplary both in his literary productions and his conversation; it always produces its desired effect and "never mangled what it was intended to heal" (24). By demonstrating—even embodying—the value and potency of the artist's language, Clare stands as a refutation of Tyrell's denial of the power of the word. And to Tyrell's dismay and frustration, Clare not only instinctively befriends Falkland, seeing in him "a mind in a certain degree congenial with his own" (25), but he also publicly praises Falkland's poetic talents and commends his skill with words.

Clare's appraisal is confirmed; repeatedly, Falkland's language becomes his instrument of power over Tyrell, whose consequent inability to manipulate words becomes the indication of his subservient position. The pattern of one man's eloquence rendering another man inarticulate and therefore impotent becomes a motif throughout the book; and an important instance of this ends the first volume. After the death of Tyrell's cousin Emily, whom he had ill-treated, Tyrell intrudes upon the rural assembly which has ostracized him, and his "well-timed interruptions and pertinent insinuations" make the townspeople lose their capacity to speak: "first to hesitate, and then to be silent" (94). When Falkland enters, his pre-eminence is established by the eloquence of his speech, which in turn forces Tyrell into silence ("and his tongue refused its office" [95]). A hierarchy of verbal ability is thus erected.

Tyrell's silence signifies his defeat; he is confronted with this inescapable evidence of Falkland's verbal superiority and his own failure to compete with it, and then relinquishes language as a tool of power. Without uttering a word, he attempts a purely physical comeback and assaults Falkland. Falkland is no match for this attack and is soundly beaten, but later that evening Tyrell is found murdered, and Falkland is accused of the crime. The final commentary made by Collins is more true than he may realize. The proper response for Falkland would have been that of Themistocles: "Strike, but hear" (98); that is, a verbal assertion which would have been more effective and valuable than physical retaliation. And yet Collins' narrative concludes with Falkland's eloquent *vindication* of himself at his trial; he converts accusation into adoration as he once more, like the true artist of Godwin's essays, calls upon and displays the power of his language "to change the nature of what he handles."

A new opposition of rhetorics is instituted as Caleb enters the "scene"¹⁰: while Volume One ends by presenting a picture of Falkland's ability to express his story and impose it on the world, Volume Two opens with Caleb reasserting his own voice as narrator. Caleb's story begins with his attempt to discover Falkland's entire story: the truth about the murder. He suspects that Falkland is guilty, despite the eloquent acquittal of himself that Collins has described, and he is immediately attracted to the secrecy which surrounds a trunk that Falkland keeps under careful surveillance. As the story progresses, the contents of that trunk become symbolically connected with narrative art. Caleb convinces himself that this trunk, which contains "all that [he] sought" (132), is the key to the mystery. But as Forester later tells Caleb, "where there is mystery, there is always something at bottom that will not bear the telling" (148; my emphasis). Mystery itself seems to be founded upon the suppression of language and speech, and it is this prohibition on expression that Caleb tries to expose and repeal in his attempts to "publish those astonishing secrets" (275; my emphasis). By the end of the novel, when Caleb considers the "contents of the fatal trunk from which all my misfortunes originated," he imagines that

¹⁰ The theatrical metaphor, with its suggestions of impersonation and repetition, is pervasive throughout *Caleb Williams*. We should also note that in his essays, Godwin uses the stage as an analogy for the "servile repetition" to which men so often seem to succumb (see note 14).

it does not contain the weapons used to murder Tyrell, but rather "a faithful *narrative* of that and its concomitant transactions, written by Mr. Falkland" (315; my emphasis). With this conception of the linguistic origins of all that has occurred, Caleb proceeds to determine the most appropriate and effective weapon for defense and revenge: "No, I will use no daggers! I will unfold a tale—" (314). He decides that his own story, till now censored, shall be told and substituted for the one penned by Falkland; his tale is revealed as an attempt to replace Falkland as author.

The competition for verbal domination between the two men begins early, and Caleb at first seems to be an equal match for Falkland as he tries to uncover the "mystery." As he learns to control both his and Falkland's remarks, Caleb's verbalization gains supremacy and he becomes adept at leading their conversations, "which by this time [he] well knew how to introduce, by insensible degrees to the point [he] desired" (116). Because Falkland is initially unwilling to suppress him by "a severe prohibition of speech" (109) or by "interrupting the freedom of [their] intercourse" (110), Caleb succeeds in manipulating his language and, through it, Falkland.

Yet as Caleb gradually extracts Falkland's story from him, he increasingly loses the ability to maintain control over his words and over himself. Falkland's language seems to annihilate and replace Caleb's; the ultimate consequence of Falkland's full narration of his history is the denial of the power and freedom of Caleb's speech. Falkland ends his confession by placing a prohibition on Caleb's language: "if ever an unguarded word escape from your lips... expect to pay for it by your death or worse" (136). And the final dissipation of Caleb's claim to articulation and self-assertion is pronounced: he will never be able to construct a history that will successfully proclaim his identity. The world, having accepted Falkland's persuasive words, will prove resistant to whatever words Caleb tries to impose on it:

Be still! If once you fall, call as loud as you will, no man on earth shall hear your cries; prepare a tale however plausible, or however true, the whole world shall execrate you for an impostor.

(154)

The only words with any currency are those sanctioned by Falkland. His language has defined a role for Caleb, and any attempt to tell

a different story and create a different character is doomed to failure.

This begins for Caleb a life of forbidden intercourse, disjointed and incomplete expression, "imperfect and mutilated" storytelling. Deprived of his words, he cannot preserve his identity. He has become a prisoner—a slave—of Falkland's masterful language, and is thereby robbed of his own. It is a loss that constantly perplexes him:

Why was it that I was once more totally overcome by the imperious carriage of Mr. Falkland, and unable to utter a word?

(154)

Caleb realizes that his failure to assert his true character derives from his inability to articulate successfully, and while in prison he decides to develop the powers he has lost. He imagines all conceivable situations and teaches himself the verbal skills appropriate for each: "I cultivated the powers of oratory suited to these different states" (186). In thus resurrecting his powers of articulation, Caleb both becomes an artist and becomes himself, as evidenced in the curious but significant syntax of his statement, "I became myself a poet" (186). Caleb is aware that his silence has made him the victim of Falkland's art, and he declares that he will no longer surrender his verbal powers and succumb to an author other than himself:

I had hitherto been silent as to my principal topic of recrimination. But I was by no means certain that I should consent to go out of the world in silence, the victim of this man's obduracy and art.

(190)

But Caleb admits that he "improved more in eloquence in the solitude of my dungeon, than perhaps I should have done in the busiest and most crowded scenes" (186). He cultivates his power to speak in isolation, sustained and supported only by himself; he still lacks the ability to advance and impress his story onto his society. When he leaves prison he finds himself still at the mercy of another author's account; "The Wonderful and Surprising History of Caleb Williams" is widely circulated and accepted, and Caleb succumbs to this superior claim of originality and authorship that calls his own into question. It is here that his "talent of mimicry" is put to use.

Rather than asserting himself, Caleb resorts to disguises; instead of performing an act of self-creation, he employs the "art of imitation" and engages "in the personating a fictitious character" (288). Ironically he reports that:

I persisted in this exertion of my faculties, through a sort of parental love that men are accustomed to entertain for their intellectual offspring.

(254)

The parental analogy is a poor fit; Caleb becomes the father not of himself, but instead of a "counterfeit character" (256) from which no one "could have traced out the person of Caleb Williams" (255). Eventually even the disguises fail, and Caleb retreats to a small rural town where he begins an "etymological analysis of the English language" (294). This apparently "accidental" choice of intellectual (and diversionary) exercise is not insignificant, for as Godwin elsewhere makes clear, this study can help to change man from the slave to the master of language.²⁰ But when Falkland's story infiltrates even this rural area, and Caleb decides to tell his own story to Laura, who has befriended him, his speech is stifled. Once again he is silenced and "walked away without uttering a word" (297).

When Caleb is utterly despairing of extricating himself from Falkland's authorial and authoritative reign, he reaches a moment of resolution and decides "I will tell a tale—!" (314). Language has imprisoned him, but it can also free him; his own words are the only instruments that can defeat Falkland's control: "With this engine, this little pen I defeat all his machinations..." (315). And he predicts that his words will not only be spoken; they will also be heard and received: "The justice of the country shall hear me! The elements of nature in universal uproar shall not interrupt me!" It is at this point that Caleb imagines that the mysterious trunk from which all his misfortunes originated contains not the dagger that killed Tyrell, but *words*:

a faithful narrative of that and its concomitant transactions, written by Mr. Falkland, and reserved in case of the worst, that, if by any unforeseen event his guilt should come to be fully disclosed, it might contribute to redeem the wreck of his reputation.

(315)

²⁰ Godwin, "Of the Study of the Classics," p. 44.

Caleb now triumphantly claims that his words shall substitute for Falkland's; he will rewrite Falkland's story, "supply its place" (316), and impose his narrative on the world.

In the concluding scene, Caleb initially presents himself in an authorial position, as "the author of this hateful scene" (320). But when he confronts Falkland, the man whose words have defined and governed his being, Caleb tries to reject his own words and to reject his authorship: "Would to God it were possible for me to retire from this scene without uttering another word!" (320). Caleb thus becomes an *unwilling* author; it is, in fact, Falkland who ultimately imposes this position on Caleb: "The situation and the demands of Mr. Falkland himself forbid me. He...would compel me to accuse" (320). Although Falkland is physically debilitated, his control, his dictatorship over his secretary, is not yet relinquished.

Under this compulsion, Caleb tells his story, and seems to perform the act of self-articulation and self-assertion that has always eluded him. But, in the end, the act betrays itself and presents Caleb as the person Falkland always proclaimed him to be; he finally can only portray himself as that character which Falkland has constructed:

I came to accuse, but am compelled to applaud. I proclaim to all the world that Mr. Falkland is a man worthy of affection and kindness, and that I am myself the basest and most odious of mankind!

(323)

In the act of speaking, Caleb actually rejects his own history and delivers a story that accords with the one created by Falkland. Consequently, Caleb loses his sense of self—"I have now no character that I wish to vindicate"—and also surrenders his claim to authorship. His narrative is no longer an assertion of self; his words no longer tell his own story:

I began these memoirs with the idea of vindicating my character. I have now no character that I wish to vindicate: but I will finish them that *thy story* may be fully understood; and that, if those errors of thy life be known which thou so ardently desiredst to conceal, the world may at least not hear and repeat a half-told and mangled tale.

(326; my emphasis)

Caleb is now determined to tell "*thy story*," turning his memoirs into Falkland's narrative. He will no longer speak for himself, create his own history, or articulate himself into being. Instead, he decides

merely to resurrect and reproduce, rather than replace, that "narrative... written by Mr. Falkland, and reserved in case of the worst, that, if... his guilt should come to be fully disclosed, it might contribute to redeem the wreck of *his* reputation" (315). Caleb's sense of his own character has become, to use the terms of Godwin's essays, "the work of the transcriber"; defeated by his own language as well as by Falkland's, he succumbs to a position of "servile repetition."

Falkland's response in this last scene is, however, almost identical to Caleb's: he embraces the picture of himself that his opponent has all along been trying to publish. He claims that Caleb's tale "has carried conviction to every hearer" (324), but we have little evidence for this other than Falkland's word, since in this closing episode the response of the rest of the world is for the most part ignored. It is as if Falkland and Caleb are telling their stories only to impress them upon each other. During this confrontation, the two versions of "things as they are" cross, but since they represent and try to impose individual formulations of the world, they do not cohere. This development is not an isolated phenomenon; by the time Godwin published *Caleb Williams*, eighteenth-century fiction had felt the impact of Sterne's Shandean world, where, as one critic explains, "a man *is* his expression," and "everyone... has his peculiar rhetoric that organizes his private world."²¹ Earl Wasserman uses *Tristram Shandy* as a symbolic line of demarcation, signalling a new conception of the world and the need for a new type of artist; and his explanation is relevant to this scene in Godwin's novel where the characters cannot maintain their hold on their versions of "things as they are." "By the end of the eighteenth century," writes Wasserman, "...each man now rode his own hobby-horse." He adds:

In Tristram's world, meaning had become a function of each person's private, subjective concerns, which alone remained as an interpretive organization... What is more, in this completely individualistic world none of these private principles ever succeeds in organizing life, and chaos is forever breaking in.²²

²¹ John Traugott, *Tristram Shandy's World: Sterne's Philosophic Rhetoric* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1954), p. 114; and his Introduction to *Laurence Sterne: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 2.

²² Earl Wasserman, *The Subtler Language* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1959), p. 170.

In *Caleb Williams*, neither man is able to sustain his own account, his individual principles of definition and organization; and, furthermore, each "half-told" story denies and defies the complete creation of its author. For while Caleb accepts Falkland's tale, and presents himself as an "atrocious, execrable wretch" (325), Falkland in turn accepts Caleb's—he calls himself "the most execrable of all villains" (324) and labels Caleb a hero. The men simply exchange, rather than expand, the terminologies of their tales. Both storytellers succumb to the attitude exhibited earlier in the novel by Laura and Collins, who resist Caleb and his story because they fear it will introduce complexities that they are not willing to recognize; they do not want to surrender the reassuring clarity of their present conceptions for a more complicated construction.²³ Although Laura maintains that "virtue... consists in actions, and not in words," her arguments belie this assertion: she wants to maintain distinctions ("the good man and the bad, are characters precisely opposite, not characters distinguished from each other by imperceptible shades") that are supported by the "plain and unadorned" tale she has heard; and she thinks that Caleb's rhetoric will dissolve these (semantic) categories and thereby create a moral ambiguity she refuses to accept: "Eloquence may seek to confound it; but it shall be my care to avoid its deceptive influence" (299-300). Collins similarly (though in a more sophisticated manner) does not want to "part with all [his] interior consolation," and would prefer not to hear Caleb's story only to learn "that there was no criterion by which vice might be prevented from being mistaken for virtue" (310). Neither wishes Caleb to introduce a rhetoric that might "confound" or "perplex" the principles of Falkland's tale which have organized their world.

But Caleb finally, like Laura, Collins, and Falkland as well, refuses to engage the complexities of his story or of his character²⁴—his story alienates him from himself because he alienates himself from his story. At the end of the novel Caleb and Falkland exchange restrictive, opposing character labels, but do not break away from them or

²³ In his discussion of Collins' attitude, Storch ("Metaphors of Private Guilt...", pp. 201-02) nicely suggests that this view "sums up the superficiality of eighteenth century benevolence: its refusal to go deeply into the human condition, its reluctance to sacrifice its comforts..."

²⁴ Kiely (*The Romantic Novel*) makes a similar point: "Even in this apparent act of justice and plain speaking, he has been unable to be true to the full complexity of his nature" (p. 95).

extend their language beyond or between them. The world as it is in *Caleb Williams* is a world that resists new constructs when the old ones are no longer large enough to constitute and encompass a full portrait of man. Godwin's literary theory maintains that the poet (and his "fictitious history") "is more to be depended upon, and comprises more of the science of man than whatever can be exhibited by the historian."²⁵ *Caleb Williams* is thus the story of unsuccessful artists—poets who are unable to express and realize the full nature of human identity, and whose words thereby betray themselves and the world which receives their stories.

Language [wrote Godwin] is in reality a vast labyrinth, a scene like the Hercinian Forest of old, which, we are told, could not be traversed in less than sixty days. If we do not possess the clue, we shall infallibly perish in the attempt....²⁶

²⁵ Godwin, from the Introduction to *Cloudesley* (London, 1830), I. xi. Quoted by David McCracken, "Godwin's Literary Theory: The Alliance Between Fiction and Political Philosophy," *PQ*, 49 (1970), 124.

²⁶ Godwin, "Of Intellectual Abortion," p. 61.

The Completed Story in "The Mystery of Edwin Drood"

For Minor Canon Corner was a quiet place in the shadow of the Cathedral, which the cawing of the rooks, the echoing footsteps of rare passers, the sound of the Cathedral-bell, or the roll of the Cathedral organ, seemed to render more quiet than absolute silence. Swaggering fighting men had had their centuries of ramping and raving about Minor Canon Corner, and beaten serfs had had their centuries of drudging and dying there...and behold they were all gone out of Minor Canon Corner, and so much the better. Perhaps one of the highest uses of their ever having been there was that there might be left behind that blessed air of tranquility which pervaded Minor Canon Corner, and that serenely romantic state of mind—productive for the most part of pity and forbearance—which is engendered by a sorrowful story that is all told, or a pathetic play that is played out.

Red brick walls harmoniously toned down in color by the time...and stone-walled gardens where annual fruit yet ripened upon monkish trees, were the principle surroundings of pretty old Mrs. Crisparkle and the Reverend Septimus as they sat at breakfast. (MED, 53)¹

The Mystery of Edwin Drood is an incomplete novel which raises the issue of completion on several levels. Most obviously, it is a narrative which precisely because it is a mystery story makes the reader aware it is unfinished in a particularly maddening way. Understandably, many of the critics who have given it their attention have been concerned with finishing the work by identifying Edwin's murderer.² In their efforts to realize the completed work, however,

*Roy Roussel teaches in the English Department at SUNY-Buffalo. He is the author of *The Metaphysics of Darkness*.

¹For convenience all page references are to the Signet edition (New York, 1961). For the sake of accuracy I have checked the quotations against Margaret Cardwell's edition (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972).

²For a discussion of the evidence for the possible endings of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* see Felix Aylmer, *The Drood Case* (London: Hart-Davis, 1964), pp. 200-11.

these critics are only mirroring the action of the novel itself. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* has as its central question the possibility of its characters completing or fulfilling their lives. In the opening chapters of the novel both John Jasper and Rosa Budd feel themselves trapped in unfinished states. Both their stories are concerned with their attempts to realize their dreams and, in this sense, finish their stories.

The narrator's reference to the completed story in his description of Minor Canon Corner suggests, moreover, that his relation to his narrative is dominated by a similar desire for completion. His association of the "serenely romantic" (MED, 53) state of mind which pervades the Corner with the "tranquility...engendered by a sorrowful story that is all told" (MED, 53) reminds us that the narrator frequently insists that his story, too, is a "history" (MED, 255) set "in those days" (MED, 57) before the coming of the railroad. Like Minor Canon Corner, his narrative would seem to derive its meaning from the fact that it frames an action which is finished and which can be presented as a "play that is played out" (MED, 53). His art, then, is an art which privileges in a special way his use of the past tense. It is this tense which defines events as completed and enforces an historical perspective. And, evidently, it is only when the story is seen in its completed form, when it recedes into this historical past, that the mood of serene romanticism which defines its meaning can appear. His narrative is a process whose value is realized only in its completion.

Yet if this description of Minor Canon Corner exists in the text as an image of the text's own completion—an image which draws the narrator as surely as Jasper's dreams of "great landscapes" (MED, 260) draw him back to Princess Puffer's—it is clear that it exists as the image of an unrealized and problematic ideal. This is not simply the result of Dickens' sudden death. The narrator's efforts to present the history of Edwin's disappearance as a completed story are compromised from the very first chapter. We only have to realize the narrator's commitment to the past tense to remember that this tense neither begins nor entirely dominates the book. Of the twenty-three chapters in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* fourteen are written in the past tense. But seven are in the present and two juxtapose past and present in striking ways. The chapters written in the present, moreover, deliberately seem to emphasize the ways in which they violate any ideal historical perspective. In them the narrator is

swallowed in the immediacy of events, constantly emphasizing the problematic outcome of a character's actions, and narrative becomes the record of an ongoing and apparently open-ended process.

The juxtaposition of these two tenses implies that the opposition between the narrative as a completed story and the narrative as an open-ended process was fundamental to Dickens' conception of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. The narrator's comment that events have their "highest uses" (MED, 53) only when they are completed suggests, moreover, why completion should be such a central issue, not only for Dickens but for the novel as a genre. The concept that the value of a story lies in its completion is in this context more than a statement of the necessity of a well-constructed plot. It implies that the text should be grounded in—should be the revelation of—some principle of completion. Like *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, *Tom Jones* and *Pamela* are stories of men who fall in love with and pursue women. They are narratives which record the movement of desire toward its chosen object. The marriages of Tom and Sophia or B. and Pamela, however, are not simply momentary satisfactions of desire. In both cases the movement of their narrative describes the pattern of the Fortunate Fall, the archetype which, in Christian thought, expresses providentially-controlled movement of the soul to God. In this context the marriages which end these stories figure the final completion of all desire in man's return to his origin. Both novels justify themselves as histories, not out of a simple commitment to realism but because their plot, like the plot of history itself, embodies a Providential plan which, seen as a finished pattern, reveals to man his true origin and end.³

To say this is only to remind ourselves that the English novel has its origins in the Christian epic and Puritan spiritual autobiography and retains to some degree their teleological assumptions. Dickens' own fiction, moreover, testifies to the way these assumptions exist in the novel form not as a residual trace but as a powerful force. The narrator of *Oliver Twist* apparently identifies himself in a way Fielding and Richardson would find entirely familiar. He is both a portrait painter who finds and portrays in Oliver's face Oliver's true origin in the transcendent force of nature, and the historian who finds in Oliver's discovery of his parentage the allegory of man's return to this origin. The completed story of *Oliver Twist*, too,

³ On the subject see J. Paul Hunter, *The Reluctant Pilgrim* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1966), particularly the last chapter.

involves not just the resolution of a realistic situation—Oliver's orphanage—but the revelation of a principle which fills the absence signified by Oliver's orphanage. In part, at least, the narrative and the narrator justify themselves in their positive imitation of this principle—and this completion.

There is still a suggestion of this possibility in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. The narrator's description in one passage of the "mellowness" (MED, 211) of the cathedral walls which are transfigured by "a soft glow [which] seems to shine from within them, rather than upon them from without" (MED, 211) makes the cathedral seem, for the moment, the manifestation of a divine presence. The narrator's juxtaposition, in this same passage, of the Cathedral with the gardens of Cloisterham which "blush with ripening fruit" (MED, 211) and his comparison of the "way-farers, leading a gypsy life between hay-making time and harvest" (MED, 211) with "travel-stained pilgrims" (MED, 211) is, from this point of view, entirely traditional. This description recalls again the image of life as a pilgrimage from the natural to the transcendent. If this moment could be sustained, then the tranquility of Minor Canon Corner would be rooted in its most obvious feature, the cathedral, and the narrator would assume an equally traditional role as the historian of this pilgrimage.

There is no doubt that the idea of life as a return to a transcendent origin retained a certain appeal for Dickens throughout his career. But there is no doubt, either, that by the time he wrote *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* he no longer saw such a return as a real possibility. In this passage, the soft glow only "seems" to transfigure the walls of the Cathedral. Significantly, it is no longer a destination for pilgrims but only a temporary shelter where wanderers, like "Bedouins" "leading a gypsy life," pause before they "fry themselves on the simmering highroads" (MED, 211) again. The sense that the Cathedral testifies to a presence which, if it ever existed, has long since disappeared is reflected in the majority of the narrator's descriptions of the Cathedral. "Grey, murky and sepulchral" (MED, 94), it appears more tomb than church, more monument to a departed past than sign of a present meaning.

The recognition that the Cathedral no longer provides an end to the pilgrimage of life emphasizes the threat the present tense expresses perfectly: the open-ended temporality of a narrative which can only record the arbitrary wanderings of pilgrims who have become Bedouins. Such a "gypsy life" (MED, 211), and such a narrative,

can, of course, end. But it can never be completed in the sense that *Tom Jones* describes the completion of Tom's journey in his marriage to Sophia and their return to Paradise Hall. The contrast between past and present tenses expresses perfectly the tension between pilgrimage and wandering and in so doing defines the problematic quality of the narrator's vision of the completed story.

The Mystery of Edwin Drood seems to have been intended by Dickens as a search for alternative grounds for the text's completion, of possible sources for the tranquility of Minor Canon Corner. For this reason it is one of Dickens' most complex and most important novels despite the fact that its mystery remains unsolved. In particular, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* investigates two possibilities for the completed story—one which is implied in the stories of Jasper and Rosa and one which involves a radical transformation of the relation between the narrator and his narrative.

II

A brilliant morning shines on the old city. Its antiquities and ruins are surpassingly beautiful, with a lusty ivy gleaming in the sun, and the rich trees waving in the balmy air. Changes of glorious light from moving boughs, songs of birds, scents from gardens, woods, and fields—or, rather, from the one great garden of the whole cultivated island in its yielding time—penetrate into the Cathedral, subdue its earthy odour, and preach the Resurrection and the Life. The cold stone tombs of centuries ago grow warm, and flecks of brightness dart into the sternest marble corners of the building, fluttering there like wings. (MED, 269)

The first of these alternative possibilities is suggested by the way in which this description inverts the usual relation between Cathedral and garden. In the description of the Cathedral cited on p. 4 the glow which transfigured its walls seemed to shine "from within them" (MED, 211). Here, however, the narrator describes the glow not as the manifestation of something present in the Cathedral but as the intrusion within these walls of the natural principle of fertility present in the "great garden" (MED, 269) of the island. It is the "vegetable life" which is "the most abundant and agreeable" evidence "of progressing life in Cloisterham" (MED, 23), which penetrates its shadows and preaches "the Resurrection and the Life" (MED, 269). And this intrusion implies a different relationship

between the life of man and the life of nature, between the cycle of man's life and the "revolving year" (MED, 142) which fills the "cultivated island" (MED, 269) with "ripening fruit" (MED, 211).

The narrator's description of the wayfarers who appear in Cloisterham "looking as if they were just made out of the dust of the earth" (MED, 211) reminds us that man's life has its origins in the dust of the gardens and in the natural cycle which originates there. "Dust with the breath of life in it" (MED, 133), men, too, "come into existence, buds" (MED, 90). But it is not only human life which is born out of the process of the natural world. Human desire has its origins there as well. The narrator's description of the nuns who have been walled up "for having some ineradicable leaven of busy mother Nature in them which has kept the fermenting world alive ever since" (MED, 24) identifies that desire as the manifestation of a larger natural process. This relation is even more clear in the figure of Rosa Budd. Her name expresses her sense of herself as something still in the process of budding and, therefore, as something immature and incomplete. It is the sign of that lack or absence which is the origin of desire. In this, however, Rosa is only an explication of what it means for all men to come "into existence, buds" (MED, 90). With the exception of Crisparkle, her sense of immaturity is shared by all the major characters in the book. Such a sense of incompleteness leads Edwin to concur in Rosa's decision to end their engagement and is behind his attraction to Helena, and, in similar ways, underlies both Neville's and Jasper's attraction to Rosa.

In *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* men experience the movement toward ripening which dominates the natural descriptions in the novel as desire. The stories of the major characters in the novel imply a vision of human life as the movement of desire toward satisfaction in a way which is apparently the expression of the movement of the natural world toward maturity. If it is true, moreover, that desire has its origin in the natural world, then perhaps it has its completion there as well. Perhaps there is a parallel between the "revolving year" (MED, 142) and the "circle of [men's] lives" (MED, 152), so that men are not only born buds but come to maturity and ripeness as part of the same natural process. The sense of tranquility and completeness which the narrator celebrates will be found in man's immediate involvement in nature.

Such an interpretation would alter radically the meaning of the

narrator's description of Minor Canon Corner. Its center would no longer be the Cathedral but rather the gardens "where annual fruit yet ripened upon monkish trees" (MED, 53). The narrator would remain an historian but he now would address himself to a desacramentalized history. If it is true that human and vegetable life are co-extensive, then the fulfillment of human existence will lie in the way the cycle of human life is intertwined with the cycle of the natural world. A history which recorded this cycle would never transcend the temporality of the natural. But it could still be a history written in the past tense because it would find in this temporality a process which carries man to fulfillment.

The stories of Rosa and Jasper are concerned with this happy union of man and nature. Like all mystery novels, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* intends a demystification, and part of this intention is realized in the narrator's discovery of the principle of "Progressing life" (MED, 23) in the apparently timeless world of Cloisterham. This principle appears now not only in the life of its gardens but also in the "unexplored romantic nooks" (MED, 126) of its inhabitants. Mrs. Twinkleton's relationship to "foolish Mr. Porters" (MED, 25), Jasper's desire for Rosa, Edwin's attraction to Helena, and, in a wider sense, all the secret relationships which tie the East—associated throughout the novel with dreams and desire—to Cloisterham and the West, can now be seen as the manifestations of a natural process which should carry man to fulfillment. Only the Cathedral and the society of oppressive respectability centered around it seems to inhibit this process. They appear now as dead structures which give the past an unnatural and confining power over the present. The only thing necessary, it seems, is one act which would break the hold these structures have on the life of Cloisterham. Once their tyranny has been cast off, men will be free to complete themselves in the "fullness of time" (MED, 199).

Jasper's murder of Edwin is such an act. This "journey" (MED, 260) which he had performed "hundreds of thousands of times" (MED, 259) in his opium dreams is intended to break this hold and to allow his dreams to be realized in the world.

Yet although this act does free desire to express itself and to realize itself in the future, it does not bring Jasper satisfaction. The removal of Edwin, although it does open the way to Rosa, does not bring her any closer to him. Quite the contrary, it only drives her further away. The scene between Jasper and Rosa in the garden of the Nun's house is at once the moment in which his passion

achieves its fullest expression and the moment its fulfillment becomes totally impossible. It is this encounter which drives Rosa away, which more than anything crystalizes the suspicions of Rosa, Grewgious and Crisparkle, brings them in league with one another against him, and results, if we can believe Forster's account of Dickens' plan, in his eventual imprisonment.⁴ The act intended to liberate and complete his life results, evidently, in his being confined to an even more monotonous and cramped "niche" (MED, 20) than he occupied as choirmaster. Jasper himself recognizes the failure of his intentions' "new medicine" (MED, 167) when he returns to Princess Puffer's to enjoy again in his dreams the journey which "when it was really done...seemed not worth the doing, it was done so soon" (MED, 259). His dissatisfaction points directly to his failure by this journey to win Rosa and to realize in the real garden of Mrs. Twinkleton's, and in the true temporality of the world which is symbolized by its sundial, his visions of "great landscapes" (MED, 260).

One way to understand Jasper's failure is to see reflected in it Dickens' persistent distrust of any aggressive action. Jasper's deliberate and willful choice of Rosa makes explicit, more than any other aspect of this novel, the growing sense of individual freedom which surfaces in Dickens' later novels. Yet the fact that Dickens makes Jasper's choice require the removal of Edwin reveals that Dickens still retains an inherent suspicion of positive action and, in Jasper's growing isolation, we can see the well-documented tendency of such action in Dickens to imprison the self.

There is, however, another implication of Jasper's failure, one which becomes apparent when we juxtapose certain elements of Jasper's story with certain elements of Rosa's. Like Jasper, Rosa feels herself to be a prisoner in the past. In chapter II her dissatisfaction with her engagement to Edwin is contrasted to the pleasure she feels eating Turkish candy in the "Lumps-of-Delight shop" (MED, 30) in a way that is obviously meant to suggest in a different key the tension between Jasper's Eastern dreams and his role in Cloisterham. In a similar manner, her decision to abandon their engagement is, like Jasper's decision to murder Edwin, a rejection of the past. But there are obvious and important differences. Rosa's and Edwin's decision is mutually agreed to. More importantly, it is not a positive act aimed at the achievement of a chosen object but rather an act of resignation; and it lacks, therefore, the qualities of self-assertion which are associated

⁴ *Ibid.*, Aylmer, p. 11.

by Dickens with isolation and imprisonment. It is not, the narrator tells us, "willful, or capricious" but "something more self-denying, honorable, affectionate, and true" (MED, 146). Jasper's act results, obviously, in the destruction of his relationship to Edwin. Rosa's decision on the other hand results in the transformation of her relationship to Edwin from fiancé to brother.

The necessity of Jasper's aggressive act is called into question, moreover, by the narrator's description of Cloisterham in the opening chapters. Here the idea that Cloisterham never changes, that it somehow has managed to imprison the flow of progressing life, is parodied in the pawnbrokers who take no pledges and in Sapsea's belief that the toasts of his youth are appropriate to the present. This sense of timelessness appears not as a real quality of Cloisterham but as the blindness of its inhabitants to the actual process of historical change. Cloisterham, the narrator tells us, was "once possibly known to the Druids by another name, and certainly to the Romans by another, and to the Saxons by another, and to the Normans by another" (MED, 22). It is, therefore, "a queer moral to derive from antiquity" that "all its changes lie behind it, and that there are no more to come" (MED, 23). The inhabitants who believe this do so with "an inconsistency more strange than rare" (MED, 23), for the real lesson of Cloisterham, it seems, is the knowledge that the principle of "progressing life" (MED, 23) carries it into the future with as little attention to the past as the children who "grow small salad in the dust of abbots and abbesses and make dirt-pies of nuns and friars" (MED, 23) pay to these former inhabitants. If human life is an expression of the same principle that allows the small salad to emerge from the dust of the past, then this principle will carry human life to fulfillment without the necessity of any radical act of destruction.

Rosa's self-denial in breaking her engagement to Edwin would seem to allow the future to manifest itself and desire to free itself in just such a natural way. Her decision makes Jasper's unnecessary. If he had only waited the way to Rosa would have been opened to him in the normal progress of events, and this suggests that his intense sense of confinement in Cloisterham is a false one. The future opens naturally to Rosa without any conscious aggressive action on her part. Consequently, this future should bring her a satisfaction unmarred by the isolation and guilt which seemed to Dickens the inevitable result of such action.

The story of Rosa after Edwin's disappearance is an investigation of this possibility. Her journey to London, a journey which parallels Jasper's, retains these qualities of self-effacement. Just as she did not leave Edwin for another but only resigned her engagement to him, so her move to London is not a movement toward a chosen end but, as the title of this chapter tells us, a "flight" from Jasper. And this difference seems to have important implications for her involvement in relationship to the "progressing life" (MED, 23) of the novel. Jasper's attempt to choose his future results in his being caught in the "wonderful chains that are forever forging, day and night, in the vast iron-works of time and circumstance" (MED, 150). His willfulness determines not only his relation to Rosa and the other characters in the novel, it also determines his relation to time and circumstance. Rosa's flight, on the other hand, implies a more open attitude which is free to accept the ripeness which the natural movement of life will bring. "When one is in a difficulty or at a loss," Mr. Grewgious tells her, "one never knows in what direction a way may chance to open" (MED, 230). It is this "business principle" of Grewgious' "not to close up any direction, but to keep an eye in every direction" (MED, 230) which introduces Tartar into Rosa's life.

Rosa's relationship to Tartar seems, in fact, to promise the completion of her budding nature. Their chance encounter, which is certainly intended to be one of the "developing changes" which will move the "depths" of a self which "had never yet been moved" (MED, 82), is described throughout these last chapters in ways which appear to set it in opposition to the scene between Jasper and Rosa in the garden of the Nun's house. Rosa, on Tartar's arm, ascends "unexpectedly" (MED, 237) to "his garden in the air, and seemed to get into a marvellous country that came into sudden bloom like the country on the summit of the magic bean-stalk" (MED, 235). Here, in this world which is "like a dream" (MED, 238) and yet is an actual garden, Rosa and Tartar enjoy an "enchanted repast" (MED, 241). And this experience is repeated later in their excursion on the Thames to "dine in some everlastingly green garden" (MED, 246).

These interludes in these gardens which seem at once real and enchanted do seem to indicate that Mr. Grewgious' principle of openness to the future is vindicated and that through an acceptance of what the future brings the union of dream and reality can take

place as a matter of course. Yet there are elements in the novel which imply that the seemingly obvious contrast between Rosa's experience of the union between dream and actual garden and Jasper's experience of the distance between the gardens of Cloisterham and the "great landscapes" (MED, 260) of his dreams is misleading. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is, of course, an unfinished work, and it is impossible to say what the final form of Rosa's and Tartar's relation would have been. But we must see that at the same time the narrator seems to imply that their enchanted gardens are realized in the natural world, he is carefully setting these occasions in opposition to the flow of time. Rosa's enchanted repast in Tartar's apartments ends because "Mr. Tartar could not make time stand still; and time, with his hard-hearted fleetness, strode on so fast that Rosa was obliged to come down from the bean-stalk country to earth" (MED, 241). In a similar manner their afternoon on the Thames ends when "all too soon, the great black city cast its shadow on the waters, and its dark bridges spanned them as death spans life, and the everlastingly green garden seemed to be left for everlasting, unregainable and far away (MED, 247).

Such passages emphasize that no human garden is everlastingly green and that both Rosa and Tartar will inevitably travel "the silent road into which all earthly pilgrimages merge" (MED, 81). The most obvious example of Grewgious' "business principle" (MED, 230) of chance is, in fact, the drowning of Rosa's mother "at a party of pleasure" (MED, 81) not unlike Rosa's and Tartar's afternoon on the Thames. These references to death remind us that if the characters in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* can attain any sense of completion it is, at best, a temporary one. Yet even this is called into question. The death of Rosa's mother not only cuts short her life, it also leaves Grewgious, whose existence is defined by his love for her, frozen at a "hopeless, speechless distance" (MED, 125) from the object of this love. The emphasis in this novel falls more on the kind of living death which occurs when, through the action of time and circumstance, desire is held at a perpetual remove from its object than it does on death as the end of life. Thus the river not only carries Rosa and Tartar toward the "gritty state of things in London" where, Rosa remarks, people were always in the condition of "waiting for something that never came" (MED, 252). Here Rosa finds herself making "the most of what was nearest her heart" (MED, 253) not with Tartar himself but only in fantasies

provoked by listening to Mrs. Twinkleton read books on voyages and sea-adventures.

Rosa in this way is not noticeably better off than Jasper, who must return to Princess Puffer's in order to recapture through opium the satisfaction which the actual performance of his "journey" (MED, 260) did not bring him. The fact that both find themselves in this state of perpetual waiting would seem to allow us to come to at least a provisional conclusion. Man is born from dust and "that mysterious spark which lurks in everything" (MED, 136). *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* accepts the fact that man has his source in this purely naturalistic principle, but continues to posit a radical discontinuity between human and natural life. This discontinuity lies not only in the fact that nature's life is cyclic while man's is linear—that individual consciousness does not die in order to be reborn—and that, consequently, he will never achieve the form of eternality which characterizes the natural world. It lies also in the fact that the "revolving year" (MED, 142) which brings ripeness to "the great garden of the whole cultivated island" (MED, 269) does not bring an equivalent ripeness, however temporary, to men. Although the romantic side of the characters in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* has its origin in the "fermenting world" (MED, 24) of nature, it finds its expression in visions—Jasper's dreams of "great landscapes" (MED, 200), Rosa's enchanted gardens—which are incompatible with the gardens of the real world and the principle of "progressing life" (MED, 23) which they express. Because the natural progress of life does not satisfy their dreams, the characters in this novel find themselves imprisoned by desire in particularly intense and frustrating ways. They define themselves by their desire but find themselves separated from its satisfaction by the very force of time and circumstance which, seen as the principle of ongoing life, is its source. Not only are the last chapters of the novel, as we have it, dominated by the imprisonment of its characters in this sort of endless dissatisfaction. The logic of the novel implies that this will not be transcended in the second half, and that all the characters will suffer the fate of Grewgious at the hands of a Nature who says "I really cannot be worried to finish off this man; let him go as he is" (MED, 86).

III

The histories of Rosa and Jasper, then, have complementary meanings. Together they imply that man will never find fulfillment

in the temporal world, either through his own actions or through the natural processes of life. Such a conclusion makes it clear that any vision of a completed story will never be realized in the imitation of history. In this context, Rosa's unfinished portrait describes the limit of a mimetic approach. "Humorously—one might almost say, revengefully—like the original" (MED, 14), its incompleteness can only reflect and emphasize the incompleteness of its subject. An historical narrative, based on a principle of imitation, will never become the "globular" (MED, 121) "picture of a true lover's state of mind" (MED, 120) which occurs when the "true lover has no existence separable from that of the beloved object" (MED, 121). Since a story which mirrors history will never record the historical union of a self with the object of its desire, this story, too, must remain unfinished.

If Rosa's story marks the inevitable failure of historical narrative, it does point to the ways in which the narrator's method represents a search for an alternative ground for the completed story. The direction of this search is implicit in the final situations of Rosa and Jasper. Both have turned from the frustrations of the world to experience their dreams in another way—Jasper in a return to Princess Puffer's and Rosa in the fantasies provoked by Mrs. Twinkleton's reading. If dreams cannot be realized, and the self completed, in history, then perhaps they can be incarnated and completed in some more appropriate form—in the world of language. Language is, after all, the product of consciousness and not of nature. Perhaps it would offer the proper medium for these visions which define the self's fulfillment. Such a language would not, of course, be tied to the real world. While it might find its subject in history, it would transform history into story—into a linguistic structure which is separate, and free, from the temporality of the natural world. To attempt this would be to follow Princess Puffer's advice when she tells Jasper "never take opium your own way...take it in a artful form" (MED, 257).

The narrator himself suggests this interpretation of his story when he ends his description of the flying waiter and the immovable waiter who serve Edwin and Grewgious by remarking that "it was like a highly finished miniature painting representing my Lords of the Circumlocution Department, Commandership-in-Chief of any sort, Government" (MED, 118). The finished quality of this painting which refers only to the fictional Circumlocution Department is

meant obviously to contrast with Grewgious' picture of a true lover's state of mind whose realization in the world must be forever incomplete. But this passage alerts us as well to the way in which its finished quality has been achieved through a process of transformation. The metaphors of the immovable waiter and the flying waiter appear initially as ways of describing the actual dinner. But in the course of the long passage, they lose their referential quality and become instead the thing being described. The passage, in other words, becomes a finished picture only by absorbing the "real" subject of the passage into a self-referential world of language.

The technique of the extended metaphor in which the linguistic surface of the description becomes gradually opaque and the reader's gaze becomes concentrated on this surface is only one of the techniques which the narrator uses to emphasize the verbal texture of the story and to detach this texture from any reference to the natural world. The translation of characters into objects—Mrs. Crisparkle into a "china shepherdess" (MED, 52)—or the anthropomorphization of objects—the wine bottles which push at their corks like "prisoners helping rioters to force the gates" (MED, 118) and the extreme lyricism of passages such as Dickens' description of the "one great garden of the...island" (MED, 269), which in its verbal extravagance makes the reader constantly aware that it is more language than description, all invite us to see the novel as a purely "artful form" (MED, 257).⁵

From this point of view we can see one other possible way to understand the narrator's celebration of the completed story in his description of Minor Canon Corner. Perhaps this is not a description of some real quality of the Corner or of the history which has occurred there, but instead a product of the displacement of this history into story. This would be one way to explain why the "highest uses" (MED, 53) of these events are realized in their absence. The distance between event and narrative is no longer simply a temporal perspective but a much more radically conceived hiatus between history and fiction. The air of tranquility which characterizes the Corner occurs only when the narrator separates it from the world of progressing life and makes it the location of a separate and independent world of story. By the same token, the narrator's

⁵ See J. Hillis Miller, "Sketches by Boz, *Oliver Twist*, and Cruikshank's Illustrations," in *Charles Dickens and George Cruikshank* (Los Angeles: Wm. Andrews Clark Memorial Library, UCLA, 1971), pp. 31-37.

use of the past tense can be seen not as the past tense of history but of narrative, where the two are understood to exist in opposition to one another. If the tranquility of completion can appear only when the "ramping and raving" (MED, 53) of history has departed—then the past tense becomes one of the primary agencies by which the narrator distances the open-ended temporality of life and creates a world of story which can be "all told" (MED, 53).

The idea that the self can complete itself in fiction implies that a purely linguistic affirmation of subjectivity is possible. Although this seems to be a radical position for a novelist who is as conservative as Dickens it is one which, again, has been associated with the novel since its inception. If the novel has one source in the epic and religious autobiography, it has another in the set of attitudes associated with the late Renaissance experience of subjectivity. One aspect of this experience was the awareness that man—no longer defined as an image of God—could become his own creator. It is this power to create the self which is invoked both by Señor Quesada when he names himself Don Quixote and by Cervantes when he invents the notes and dedicatory epistles which justify his novel.

This radical strain exists as well in the most conservative English novels. When Richardson has Pamela refer to her letters as "a pretty novel" she has written or Fielding reminds us that it is he and not Providence who saves Tom from hanging both are asking us to see their novels as equivalent acts of self-creation.⁶ Both these novels are defined by the dialect between radical and conservative interpretations, and in both cases these interpretations range themselves around the pattern of the Fortunate Fall in an interesting way. It remains the center of both readings, becoming at once the record of a Providential movement and the pattern of an orphan's invention of its own identity. In part this ambivalence is the natural result of the persistence of Christian tropes in an increasingly secular world and, from this point of view, *Tom Jones* becomes a destructive parody of *Paradise Lost*. In part, however, the symmetry of these novels appears as a kind of mystification whereby the created self takes on the same form and solidity that the Christian self possessed. This symmetry, in other words, implies that the act of writing as one act of self-creation can ground the self as solidly—as completely—as the act of writing understood as the imitation of a transcendent principle.

⁶ Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* (New York: Norton, 1958), p. 242.

This ambivalence is present, too, in *Oliver Twist*. The narrator who defines himself as an historian also presents himself as a writer of burlesque melodramas who alternates comic and tragic, like the lean and fat in bacon, in order to please his audience. The history of Oliver becomes, in this context, a self-consciously fictional narrative, not the imitation of a real action. But the fact that the narrator as melodramatist chooses to write the traditional story of Oliver's discovery of his origin endows his narrative with an apparent solidity which transcends our ideas of the melodramatic and gives his narrative a quality of completion it would not otherwise have.

The narrator's intention is, from this point of view, clear. He assumes both Jasper's failure to choose actively a self in the world and Rosa's failure to find completion through the workings of chance. Consequently he turns his intention not toward the world but away from it toward the creation of a "finished painting" (MED, 23). The center of the Corner's serene romanticism would be no longer either the cathedral or the garden, but Mrs. Crisparkle's "wonderful closet, worthy of Cloisterham and Minor Canon Corner" (MED, 100) which she turns to whenever her son "wanted support" (MED, 100). In the narrator's description of this closet the Cathedral bell and organ whose sounds "had made sublimated honey of everything in store" (MED, 101) appear not the echo of a transcendental harmony but as the expression of a more human art represented by the portrait of Handel who "beamed down at the spectator, with a knowing air of being up to the contents of the closet, and a musical air of intending to combine all its harmonies in one delicious fugue" (MED, 100). And it is presumably this human art which is responsible for the fact that everyone who dips into these contents returns "mellow-faced, and seeming to have undergone a saccharine transfiguration" (MED, 101).

To see the book this way is to see it as a fairy-story in which history is transformed into tale in the same way that ordinary materials of the world have been transformed into the "benevolent inhabitants" (MED, 100) of the closet, a "Court of these Powers" (MED, 100) whose members include "pickles, in a uniform of rich brown double breasted buttoned coat" who "announced their portly forms, in printed capitals" and jams "of a less masculine temperament and, as wearing curl-papers, announced themselves in feminine calligraphy, like a soft whisper" (MED, 100). The association of the calligraphy of the labels and the metamorphosis of the contents reminds us of

the connection between the narrator's transformation of his subject through linguistic strategies, such as the extended metaphor and those moments when the narrator explicitly invites us to consider the resulting work as a fairy-story-by describing, for example, Bazzard as Mr. Grewgious' "Familiar" called into existence "by a magic spell which had failed when required to dismiss him" (MED, 114) or Rosa as "the fairy-queen of Mrs. Twinkleton's establishment" (MED, 144).⁷

An important critic of the novel has remarked that "certain fairytales still retain fragments" of an epic totality in which immanent and transcendental were inextricably interwoven.⁸ The association of Mrs. Crisparkle's closet with the harmony of the cathedral bell certainly expresses Dickens' nostalgia for such totality. But more than this, the a-historical world of the fairy-story seems to become for Dickens, as it did for some German Romantics, the appropriate mode to express the ability of consciousness to separate itself from the natural and create a realm which is the expression of this freedom. In this context the meetings of Tartar and Rosa in his "marvellous" garden and in "everlastingly green garden" (MED, 246) where they dine on their excursion become the locus of this attempt to separate story from history. These passages can now be seen to accept the irreconcilability of human dreams and ongoing life which is figured in Rosa's and Tartar's return to London, and to concentrate instead on

⁷For a recent extended study of Dickens' use of the fairytale see Michael C. Kotzin, *Dickens and the Fairy Tale* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1972). Kotzin, however, deals almost entirely with parallels between fairy-tales and Dickens' plots. The best evidence for the association of the fairy-tale and this sort of linguistic transformation in Dickens are numerous articles in *Household Words* where the fanciful description of everyday reality often involves the use of fairy-tale allusions and motifs. See especially the article on "Post-Office Money Orders," *Charles Dickens' Uncollected Writings from "Household Words": 1850-59*, ed. Harry Stone (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1968), 392-400, which is a good example of this. The relationship between this kind of description and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is suggested by the description of Rochester Cathedral in "The Doom of English Wills" (*Household Words*, I, 164), in which the Cathedral-close becomes a symbol for the imagination. Rochester Cathedral was, of course, the model for the Cathedral in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. For a discussion of the way in which such strategies of linguistic transformation are at the basis of Dickens' art see J. Hillis Miller, "The Sources of Dickens' Comic Art," *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 24 (1969), 467-476.

⁸Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), p. 47.

the narrator's ability to embody a sense of completion by transforming these events into fairy-story.

The relationship between the story of Rosa and Tartar and the narrator's assertion of his power to transform is suggested by the similarity between the locker from which Tartar, "by merely touching the spring knob... and the handle of a drawer," produces "wonderful macaroons, glittering liqueurs, magically-preserved tropical spices, and jellies of celestial tropical fruits" which make up their "enchanted repast" (MED, 247), and Mrs. Crisparkle's closet. This similarity provides the proper context for the "transfiguration" (MED, 101) which takes place when the narrator describes Tartar as a "water-giant" taking Rosa, the "fairy queen" (MED, 144), or "First Fairy of the Sea" (MED, 237), to his "garden in the air... a marvellous country that came into sudden bloom like the country on the summit of the magic beanstalk" (MED, 235).

The allusions to fairy-stories which are concentrated in this description suggest that if *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* was going to record "a tale that was all told" (MED, 53) it would do so only on the level of fairy-story. Such a completion would ground the tranquility which the narrator attributes to the Corner securely in the power of the narrator and would represent the novel as an aesthetic object over the idea of the novel as a realistic history. Yet the idea that *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* was intended to dramatize the narrator's transformation of history into story returns us to the tension in this book between past and present tenses, for the awareness that the past tense is an important agency in this transformation only underscores the conflict. Unfinished novels allow only probable conclusions, of course, and there is no way of establishing with any certainty the final success or failure of the narrator's effort. Yet the strong awareness of the present tense in a story which, from the narrator's point of view, should appear from its beginning as something completed would seem to compromise the success of his efforts, and, consequently, to undermine the ability of consciousness to define itself in language.

One key to understanding this failure lies in what might be called the centripetal movement of the important passage in which the narrator's description of Grewgious' and Edwin's dinner transforms it into a picture "like a highly finished miniature painting representing my Lords of the Circumlocution Department" (MED, 118). As we have seen, this passage located the narrator's vision of completion

in his power to translate history into story, and centers the narration in the intentionality of the narrator's consciousness. But at the same time this description seems to be affirming the possibility of such a transformation effecting a completed story, it breaks the idea of the story as a closed, completed system by referring it to another text by way of the description of the Circumlocution Office in *Little Dorrit*.

It might be argued that what is at issue here is simply the distinction between an individual work and the totality of an author's writing, and that Dickens is merely inviting us to see him embodied and defined by his presence in the entire corpus of his work. But this possibility is not borne out by the way in which the narrator's power of transformation is associated with the fairy-tale motif in the book. The narrator does not choose a single fairy-tale as the basis of his narrative in a way which would allow us to see his use of this motif as the expression of an authorial intentionality. The case is quite the opposite. The references to fairy-tales appear in this work either in general allusions to enchanted gardens or in specific references to individual tales such as Jack and the beanstalk. But in neither instance are they integrated into a single narrative structure. The effect of these references, consequently, is to dissolve the narrator's story through a series of intertextual references which make it appear no longer centered in the narrator's act of transformation but force us to see it as one repetition of a set of narrative motifs. These are motifs, moreover, which are not themselves the expression of an intentionality. They do not, in other words, embody the presence of an individual consciousness. Like myths, fairy-tales have no specific individual source but exist as elements in an essentially infinite series of variations which cannot be referred either to an authorial consciousness or to some independent, "real" world of which they are an imitation.

From this point of view, the narrator's story can never be finished in the sense that it might become a closed structure which affirms the individual existence of his consciousness. Instead, the act of writing opens out into a field of language which denies the centrality of the narrator who apparently brings it into being. The translation of history into story, which begins as the positive assertion of this individuality, ends in the impersonal play of narrative motifs. This is precisely the implication of his reference to the Circumlocution Department, where the intentionality of human actions is swallowed up and dissipated in the endless circularity of language.

V

These histories of Rosa and Jasper show that man is limited, finally, by an unbridgeable gap between himself and the natural world. Now, since it is apparently the nature of language that stories can never be self-contained, the narrator is faced with an equivalent rupture in his relation to his narration. He finds himself defined by a two-fold separation, distanced at once from the world of nature and the world of language.⁹

This awareness leaves both the narrator and the reader in a double bind. Dickens' works, from the beginning of his career, have balanced themselves between realism and a kind of artful burlesque. On the one hand, he shares with most English novelists a distrust of purely aesthetic solutions. On the other hand, his writings are characterized by a kind of verbal excess which is always violating the limits of realism and seeming to assert the validity of linguistic structures. In this sense the narrator of *Oliver Twist*, who describes himself as a biographer, has always lived uneasily with the narrator who describes himself as a melodramatist.

The Mystery of Edwin Drood is not unusual, then, in the fact that it addresses these opposing tendencies. All of Dickens' work, and, as I have tried to indicate, much of the English novel, can be read as a dialectic between the ideas of history and story. What is important in this novel is the relentlessly precise way in which Dickens demystifies both history and story as possible grounds for completion. The narrator, it seems, can only record the inevitable tension between the idea of completion and the conditions which inevitably frustrate its realization. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* seems, in this way, Dickens' final comment on his own search for tranquility. It is undoubtedly accidental that he did not live to finish the novel. But the ironic awareness of the narrator suggests that its unfinished state mirrors, in an uncanny way, its theme and that even if Dickens had lived to end it, we would have found ourselves, like Rosa in London, awaiting a completion that never comes.

⁹ On this theme see Paul DeMan, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," *Interpretation: Theory and Practice*, ed. Charles Singleton (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 173-209. This essay is, obviously, an attempt to apply DeMan's argument to Dickens. But I have tried to demonstrate that, for Dickens, the moment of Romantic irony, when the artist realizes the failure of his work to embody the ideal, takes the form of a realization that language itself will not allow such an incarnation.

Eisenstein and Kabuki

Although Sergei Eisenstein had already made three silent films when he first saw the Japanese Kabuki theater transplanted to the Moscow stage, he was no stranger to the art form. He had studied Japanese language and art forms as a student. Both Ezra Pound in his imagist poems and Eisenstein in his "monistic ensemble" formulation of film montage drew upon the Chinese ideogram. Both began with a misconception: that the word itself (the Chinese character) could carry the pictorial equivalent for its linguistic meaning. What that misconception fostered in terms of innovative art forms in this century is certainly, in retrospect, enough to erase the original sin.

I propose to treat the relationship between the Kabuki theater and Eisenstein, especially in terms of the three great silent films of the latter—*STRIKE* (1924), *THE BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN* (1925) and *OCTOBER* (1927). I have deliberately chosen to deal with his silent films, since his later sound films, although pertinent to his idea of the "monistic ensemble" in Kabuki, would require a discussion of asynchronous sound and stylized color, which have more to do with Eisenstein's appreciation of Western films and art forms than with Kabuki. And, although he and Pound could certainly be situated within a tradition in any discussion of Modernism, my intention is not to define the whole of Modernist aesthetics in terms of one artist's work. Allusions to Pound will be drawn only to serve as a point of comparison with Eisenstein and Kabuki, especially in terms of the "superimposition" method in both. I will discuss Kabuki in its relation to haiku poetry and the *ukiyo*e woodblock prints, since Eisenstein draws parallels between them in his essays in *Film Form*.¹ At the same time, I will discuss the cinematographic possibilities in Kabuki, treating first the Kabuki stage, then the Kabuki actor, then the Kabuki performance, and finally the effect of Kabuki upon its audience. At each step, I will relate these cinematographic possibilities to Eisenstein, not only in light of his theoretical essays in *Film Form*, but also in light of his three films.

* William F. Van Wert teaches film and creative writing at Temple University. He has published two books on film, a collection of poetry and numerous short stories.

¹ Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form*, edited and translated by Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1949).

When the Kabuki troupe of Ichikawa Sadanji visited Moscow and Leningrad in 1928, the Soviet press reacted somewhat condescendingly. A typical example was the review in *Pravda* on August 26, 1928.

There is of course no question about the drama 'Kabuki' being a truly fine achievement. But it is fine in the same sense that a romantic historical movie depicting medieval castles and the leaders of faked up wars between feudal lords is fine. We, however, have done away with those things... Some people say it is necessary to distinguish between form and content. How is it possible to distinguish between the two? It is possible only in the dramatic performances restricted to one social class—the repertoires of the medieval guild of diamond polishers, for instance, which possessed a complete combination and a perfect harmony in spite of the fact that in them the two were distinguished. Thus, it is essentially the form, rather than the content, which is our enemy... The populace of Moscow can learn absolutely nothing from the Kabuki.²

Such criticism tended to look at Kabuki historically and politically, with one eye on the medieval castles and feudal lords whose roots in Soviet Russia had only been exterminated eleven years earlier and the other eye on the Russo-Japanese War whose reverberations could still be felt in Soviet Russia. But even if there had been no conflict between the two countries, the submission of the Kabuki characters within the plays to their superiors—the vassals to their lords, samurai to their lords, the lords to their emperor—must have seemed reprehensible to post-Revolution Russians, whose orientation was towards social realism and art that promoted class equality. Thus, for example, the *seppuku*³ deaths of the loyal forty-seven *ronin*⁴ at the end of CHUSINGURA must have upset the Soviet audience a great deal, if taken literally as a representation of class dynamics in Japan. Donald Richie has commented on this nihilistic tendency in Kabuki.

In the Japanese world of drama there is only one reality, and for this reason Japanese drama but rarely penetrates beneath

² Hamamura, Sugawara, Kinoshita and Minami, *Kabuki* (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1956), p. 146.

³ *Seppuku* refers to the ritual suicide of the warrior class, which is often referred to in the West as *harakiri*, somewhat erroneously.

⁴ *Ronin* were unemployed samurai, either because their lord had dismissed them or because their lord had died, leaving them unaffiliated.

the surface of existence. The status quo must be unquestionably accepted and the characters, particularly in the period-film, the Kabuki, and the Bunraku doll-drama, must be meaninglessly sacrificed.⁵

To accept a sacrifice like that of the forty-seven *ronin* to their lord was perhaps too close to feudal serfdom and the Czar for the *Pravda* critic, who labels Kabuki as escapist, to be seen in the same way as a "romantic historical movie." Ironically, the critic did not extend his analogy to Eisenstein, as Eisenstein himself did in *Film Form*. The *Pravda* critic dismissed the story-line of Kabuki from a representational standpoint, when Kabuki, as I will point out, is presentational. Such a critic wanted real-life sets, real-life citizens instead of actors, real-life drama, not the elaborate make-up, exaggerated gestures and postures, the stylized vocal and musical delivery of the Kabuki. Such a critic was incapable of seeing that in Kabuki the "story" is incidental to the actor, the narrator, the samisen player, the multiple change of sets and costumes, not off-stage or in the dark, but before the spectators' eyes. Ultimately, such a critic dismissed Kabuki, because it is not naturalistic.

Only Eisenstein reacted to Kabuki with enthusiasm, first justifying the "typage" of Kabuki, then presenting his idea of *ensemble* and his discovery of synesthesia in the plays.

Can one milk a he-lamb? ... No such art is known to the practises of farming villages. We often say, 'That fellow produces neither wool nor milk—he is of no use whatsoever.' But even he has a name which he has faithfully earned and some function which should be respected.

Alas, however, our critical vanguard will not look at things in such a way. The most remarkable phenomenon of the theatrical art—the Kabuki—has been brought to our country. The most noticeable point in which the Kabuki differs from the dramatic presentation of our country—if there is such a point—is the complete unification of the *ensemble*. To the Japanese, sound, action, space, and voice do not accompany each other, nor do they parallel each other; they combine and co-operate as elements of equal significance... It reminds one of football, which is the most collectivistic of sports. The grandeur of Kabuki comes from its art of subsumption, which is different from accompaniment.

⁵ Donald Richie and Joseph Anderson, *The Japanese Film* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), p. 322.

It is the subsumption of the fundamental objectives of the function of one material and another, of the realm of one 'stimulus' and another. In the Kabuki, we 'hear the action,' 'see the sound.' As the voice does not sing with the notes, the hand has to present them! This is presented with the accompaniment of sounds from behind the stage and we are mesmerized by the sublime perfection.⁶

Significantly, it was Ichikawa Sadanji who brought the troupe to Russia. Sadanji's links with the West and with film were greater than any other Kabuki actor. Sadanji had studied at an actor's school in London prior to his trip. This same Sadanji was to return to Japan to form with Kaoru Osanai the "Liberty Theatre," based upon André Antoine's "Théâtre Libre." Their "Liberty Theatre" would adapt plays from the West, such as Shakespeare's Hamlet and Ibsen's John Gabriel Borkman, using Kabuki settings and Kabuki actors. Thus, ironically, while Eisenstein's direction was away from the representational toward the presentational, Sadanji's own direction, immediately after the dissolution of the troupe he took to Moscow, was away from the presentational toward a total naturalism, even including Hamlet delivering his "to be or not to be" soliloquy riding a bicycle, since Shakespeare and the bicycle were both synonymous with the West!

Even at the time of the troupe's visit to Russia, the link between the Kabuki performances and film was clear. The Japanese film director Teinosuke Kinugasa had already studied with Eisenstein. Another film director, Shiro Kido, came with the Sadanji troupe, expressly to show his films to Eisenstein and ironically at a time when the films of Eisenstein were denied entrance in Japan. Eisenstein informed Kido that there was too much "unnecessary footage" in Japanese films, and that Japan was a country "that has in its culture an infinite number of cinematographic traits, strewn everywhere with the sole exception of—its cinema."⁷

Eisenstein found no such "unnecessary footage" in Kabuki. He saw in Kabuki the means to transcend naturalism, just as Yeats looked to the Noh plays for the same alternative to naturalism. Eisenstein explained Kabuki's supremacy in terms of its *ensemble*.

We are familiar with the emotional ensemble of the Moscow Art Theatre—the ensemble of a unified collective "re-experi-

⁶Hamamura et. al., pp. 147-48.

⁷Richie and Anderson, p. 57.

ence"; the parallelism of ensemble employed in opera (by orchestra, chorus and soloists); when the settings also make their contribution to this parallelism, the theater is designated by that dirty word "synthetic"; the "animal" ensemble finally has its revenge—that outmoded form where the whole stage clucks and barks and moos a naturalistic imitation of the life that is led by the "assisting" human beings.⁸

Clearly, Eisenstein saw in the Kabuki plays a reintegration of all those disparate elements that had been fragmented in the Western naturalistic theatre. Clearly, he praised the Kabuki for its equivalency of theatrical elements: song, dance and drama. He saw in the Kabuki the importance of human gesture, whether totally bent upon the expression of an emotion or broken down into individual parts—the gesture of a right arm or right leg—to convey that emotion (in film terms, analytical montage or editing); the importance of various backdrops within a single scene (long shot and closeup in film); the importance of the *hanamichi*⁹ (either close-up or dissolve, as the close-up in the Quarterdeck sequence of *POTEMKIN* and the dissolves of animals to characters with the same animals' names in *STRIKE*); the importance of the *samisen*, flute or drum which neither accompanied nor precluded the human actor or player, but rather was in equal balance with the human involvement, even adding another dimension (synesthesia) to the pantomime and dance of the exaggerated *mie*.¹⁰ Clearly, in Kabuki the actors did not simply "assist" the naturalistic imitation of life that Eisenstein saw in the plays of the Moscow Art Theatre, whose fidelity to real life led to barnyard farce.

Kabuki took its subjects from the Noh plays, from the doll-theatre and from contemporary history. But from the outset, Kabuki was presentational; even in the plays that dealt with contemporary history, it was more concerned with design than with factual detail, with the image more than with the idea behind the image, with sensation more than with biography.

The actor's gesture does not reproduce reality. Instead it is a rhythmic and designed ordering of the gesture observed in actuality. The design emerges on the surface and therein

⁸ Eisenstein, p. 20.

⁹ The *hanamichi* is the extended ramp from the Kabuki stage into the audience on which important entrances and exits are made.

¹⁰ A *mie* is a self-contained, rigid attitude of the masculine Kabuki character.

lies its artistic validity. The setting is not conceived as an illusionistic representation of reality, but in terms of a designed, decorative background for the actor. The audience does not go to the theatre to be moved by images made to resemble those occurring in actuality, but by images clearly distinguished from reality by the precision of their design.¹¹

The precision of the design and the lack of transitions form the link between Kabuki imagery and Haiku imagery. Kabuki and haiku are joined in two ways for Eisenstein: in their "capacity of reducing visual and aural perceptions to a 'common denominator'"¹² and in their "non-differentiation of perception—a well-known absence of the sensation of 'perspective.'"¹³ Both of these distinctions add up to montage (editing in film) for Eisenstein. Just as the Kabuki gesture is the empirical gesture, the rigid condensation of all meanings inherent in that gesture (and, thus, ambiguous), so too the haiku depends upon a rigid system of syllabification and a process of condensation, of reduction to the barest minimum. Likewise, montage for Eisenstein was a multiplication of meaning through a reduction in film frames.

Haiku, then, is a comparison of two or more ideas expressed in the poem itself, but expressed with an "omission of words which would be required in a grammatically formed sentence but which are not really needed to make the sense clear."¹⁴ Where there is the omission of words, there is also the use of *kireji* or "cut" words, which both reinforce the lack of transition and compensate for it. Thus, two ideas or images, the more opposite the better, are juxtaposed to create at least a third idea or image which is both of the others and neither of them at the same time. Because of the word omissions and the use of cut-words, the effect seems more one of total immersion, of collision and destruction rather than of juxtaposition.

If we employ Pound's term of "superposition" rather than juxtaposition, this effect can be illustrated. If we place two color slides whose subjects (images) are completely different, one on top of the other, the two images lose their distinction, lose their identity: they

¹¹ Earle Ernst, *The Kabuki Theatre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 73.

¹² Eisenstein, p. 24.

¹³ Eisenstein, p. 26.

¹⁴ Harold G. Henderson, *An Introduction to Haiku* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1958), p. 7.

become a third image, although there are still only two color slides. We have created a third image by reducing the two slides to one slide: we have multiplied through reduction. And therein lies the essence of the Kabuki gesture, the haiku poem and Eisenstein's montage. Eisenstein called his montage a "collision" of ideas, a collision which is dialectic and symbiotic, in which the thesis and antithesis images are real images shown to the spectator, while the synthesis image, the result of the other two created through editing, occurs only in the spectator's mind, never on-screen.

In terms of the Kabuki, the same operation occurs. Genzo in *TERAKOYA* ("The Village School") is ordered to behead the son of his lord, a child that he pretended was his own. This discovered, Genzo knows that he cannot escape with the child and that he will be forced to submit to the order.

His state of mind is apparent as he enters the *hanamichi* and his despair grows stronger as he moves toward the *shichi-san*.¹⁵ There he pauses, and an idea crosses his mind: Perhaps he will be able to substitute the head of one of the pupils in his school. With this change in the direction of his thoughts, he moves onto the stage where the school children are seated at their desks.¹⁶

The change is expressed in one gesture, that of a rigid *mie* at the precise spot of the *shichi-san* on the *hanamichi*. The Genzo with an insoluble dilemma and the Genzo with the solution to that dilemma are super-posed in that one gesture. The pause and the *mie* at the *shichi-san* in Kabuki are the equivalent of superposition in haiku, of montage in Eisenstein. The *mie* both suppresses the logical linear transition and bridges the gap caused by that suppression, by forcing the spectator to make the transition, to create the image of synthesis. Pound said of this participation:

It is the presentation of such an image which gives that sudden sense of liberation; that sense of freedom from time and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art.¹⁷

¹⁵ The *shichi-san* is the area of greatest acting strength and symbolic importance on the *hanamichi* ramp. It means "7/10's" or seven-tenths of the distance to be covered on the *hanamichi*.

¹⁶ Ernst, p. 95.

¹⁷ Earl Miner, "Haiku and the Image" in his *The Japanese Tradition in British and American Literature* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 125.

How close this is to Eisenstein. Instead of Pound's "emotional-intellectual" construct, Eisenstein substitutes "depictive-intellectual." Instead of the "cut" words of haiku, Eisenstein speaks of *caesurae*. And the "sudden growth" of Pound becomes an actual "physical change" in Eisenstein's discussion of the organic-ness and pathos in POTEMKIN:

Pathos shows its affect—when the spectator is compelled to jump from his seat... In brief—when the spectator is forced to "go out of himself."¹⁸

Pound also stated in his manifesto on Imagist poetry: "Use no superfluous word, no adjective which does not mean something." How close this is to Eisenstein's appreciation of the laconism of Kabuki and the haiku poem and his advice to Shiro Kido about "unnecessary footage" in film. In that context, there can be no more economical film than STRIKE. Shots of a monkey, an owl, a bulldog and a fox dissolve to become the faces in the same posture, the same *mie* of the men bearing those animals' names in the police dossiers. A title employing *kireji* or "cut" words exclaims "A 'chariot' for the management," which is then followed by a shot of workers pushing a wheelbarrow during the strike. Finally, STRIKE provides some excellent examples of montage used to convey metaphor in a dialectic. After the stockholders have decided to reject the demands of the workers, the Director surprises the stockholders by pushing a button, causing a tray of drinking glasses and bottles to appear along with a lemon-squasher. He tells one of the others to press it hard and the juice will be squeezed out. Eisenstein then cuts to a shot of the Cossacks' horses pressing hard on the helpless strikers. Again, near the end of the film, shots of pigs being slaughtered, gutted and ripped apart in a slaughterhouse, are edited and mixed with shots of the striking workers being annihilated by the Cossacks. And whereas someone like Pudovkin would fatten his film with descriptive titles like "Ready, waiting, grim, determined" (in THE END OF ST. PETERSBERG, 1927), Eisenstein would convey those same adjectives visually through the use of a *mie*. There are many more titles in Pudovkin, and these titles are much more explanatory, repeating the visuals or filling in dialogue, much less explosive than the titles of Eisenstein; Pudovkin's titles are parallel to the visuals in a linear sequence, whereas the titles of Eisenstein are more often

¹⁸ Eisenstein, p. 166.

counterpoints to the visuals, as the samisen works contrapuntally with the Kabuki actor's dance or *mie*.

Conflict in theme must correspond to conflict in structure for Eisenstein. He forces the spectator to twist his neck, as the spectator in Kabuki must twist his from the main stage to the *hanamichi*; Eisenstein forces the viewer to adjust his eye focus quickly, jump-cutting from long shot to extreme close-up, just as the Kabuki viewer must adjust from seeing an actor five feet away in focus to an actor fifty feet away in focus. Eisenstein forces his viewer to adjust his angle of vision as well, as in the bridge scene in *POTEMKIN*, in which Tissé photographed the workers on a diagonal ramp, then restored the frame, so that the workers seem tilted as they walk. Eisenstein championed the asymmetrical, quoting Baudelaire for justification.

That which is not slightly distorted lacks sensible appeal; from which it follows that irregularity—that is to say, the unexpected, surprise and astonishment, are an essential part and characteristic of beauty.¹⁹

Eisenstein found in the woodblock print this same asymmetry, this same distortion. The woodblock print is to the Kabuki what the still photograph is to the film, or more aptly, what the shot is to montage. Most of the prints, like those of Sharaku that Eisenstein analyzed, were of Kabuki actors in a *mie*. The nose is longer than it would be in life; the space between the eyes is less than it would be in life; the face in proportion to its background is another distortion. Yet, although not realistic, the twisted faces are believable, if we accept Eisenstein's premise that Sharaku "set up the essence of the psychic expression as the norm for the proportions of the single features."²⁰ With the "mask" of the *mie*, the spectator transcends the realism of a single moment toward the ritual of all moments. The "mask" is more real than the face; the statue of Napoleon in *OCTOBER* is more real than the actor who plays Krensky; the statues of the lions in *POTEMKIN* are more real than the Generals inside the Generals' Quarters.

In this distortion of physical space, Eisenstein saw the equivalent of temporal distortion in the cinema, disintegration for effect:

Is this not exactly what we of the cinema do temporally, just as Sharaku in simultaneity, when we cause a monstrous

¹⁹ Eisenstein, p. 51.

²⁰ Eisenstein, p. 33.

disproportion of the parts of a normally flowing event, and suddenly dismember the event into "close-up of clutching hands," "medium shots of the struggle," and "extreme close-up of bulging eyes," in making a montage disintegration of the event in various planes? In making an eye twice as large as a man's full figure? ! By combining these monstrous incongruities we merely collect the disintegrated event into one whole, but in *our* aspect. According to the treatment of our relation to the event.²¹

Thus, spatial perspective is as much a question of tempo in film as it is in the Kabuki plays. Actions are always slowed down at the *shichi-san* of the *hanamichi* for emotional effect. So, too, tempo is slowed to a halt in *POTEMKIN*, so that the raised and clenched fists of the sailors and the people of Odessa can change from grief for the dead Vakulinchuk to anger and revolt. So, too, in terms of real time, the Odessa Steps sequence might have taken a couple minutes at most; but, by breaking down the individual parts of the sequence, by cutting from close-ups of the face of the woman with the carriage on one visual plane to medium and long shots of the advancing hordes of Cossacks on another plane, Eisenstein achieves that "monstrous disproportion of the parts of a normally flowing event." In so far as the camera records real places, real steps and real people, the film is, as all films are, representational. But in so far as Eisenstein tampers with the normal camera flow, the normal sequence of events, the normal duration/temporality of events, he is, as few others filmmakers have been, presentational.

To extend this point, we will have to look at the Kabuki stage and actor in more detail. We have already spoken briefly of the Kabuki main stage. Upon this stage most of the Kabuki drama unfolds; the stage may be arranged in different levels, so that the characters may step up or down from one plane to another. There is no segregated space between this stage and the audience, as there is in the Western theatre, in which the open space is for the orchestra. In Kabuki the samisen player, the narrator, if there is one, and other musicians, if there are any, are on the main stage itself, or on a revolving stage which is on the main stage and to the right. In a sense, the spatial segregation of the musicians in the Western theatre forces them into a subordinate role, that of simply accompanying the drama on stage. The spatial proximity of the

²¹ Eisenstein, p. 34.

musicians in Kabuki to the action of the play creates a kind of equality between the two: effects of synesthesia are, thus, much easier to obtain.

Two things about the Kabuki stage should especially interest us here: (1) the varying use of backdrops and sets, and (2) the *hanamichi*. About the first of the two, Eisenstein constructs a detailed schema of four aesthetic removals within the same scene. One action creates four removes. He cites the example of a character named Yuranosuke leaving a surrendered castle. The actor moves from the back of the stage to the front.

Suddenly the background screen with its gate painted in natural dimensions (close-up) is folded away. In its place is seen a second screen, with a tiny gate painted on it (long shot). This means that he has moved even further away. Yuranosuke continues on. Across the background is drawn a brown-green-black curtain, indicating: the castle is now hidden from his sight. More steps. Yuranosuke now moves out on to the "flowery way." This further removal is emphasized by ...the *samisen*, that is,—by sound!!

First removal—steps, i. e., a *spatial* removal by the actor.

Second removal—a flat *painting*: the change of the backgrounds.

Third removal—an *intellectually*-explained indication: we understand that the curtain "effaces" something visible.

Fourth removal—*sound*! ²²

Within these four removals Eisenstein recognized the lesson of counterpoint. The first removal, the spatial removal, represents the close-up, seen in terms of actual movement away from a back-drop. The second removal involves the change of backgrounds, the equivalent of the long shot in film. The actor hasn't changed size; only the backdrop gate has "changed" size. We might think again of the Odessa Steps sequence in *POTEMKIN*. Isn't this what Eisenstein does, pitting an extreme close-up of a woman against the long shot of the Cossacks advancing? The third removal should remind us again of Pound's definition of the image and the aforementioned discussion of haiku. Again, the actor has moved but a few steps; he has not changed in size. We are forced to imagine his

²² Eisenstein, p. 22.

spatial progression through the presentational use of the closed curtain. Naturalistic-theatre, which is representational, has no way of showing this removal in time and space that the Kabuki accomplishes effortlessly through a change of backdrop, the use of a curtain, the use of the extended stage-ramp or *hanamichi*, and the use of samisen playing to convey the actor's extreme emotional state. This fourth removal on the *hanamichi*, involving an even more formal, more presentational device than the curtain, by which we "hear movement" and "see sound," lies at the core of Eisenstein's conception of film montage.

There it is: "Whatever notes I can't take with my voice, I'll show with my hands!" But here it was taken by the voice *and* shown with the hands! And we stand benumbed before such a perfection of—montage.²³

In the same way, we are asked to accept the intercutting of close-up and long shot in *POTEMKIN*, where the film size of the woman's face is perhaps five times that of the Cossacks' whole bodies, just as we are asked to accept the samisen-playing and the haiku image as psychic expressions for the proportions of single features. Eisenstein's *caesura* is the Kabuki removal, both of which force a leap in logic or "transfer" in the audience. This is the pathos that Eisenstein said distinguished *POTEMKIN* as drama, not as newsreel.

Just as the curtain for Yuranosuke and the sliding doors for Izaemon were devices of isolation, of bas-relief between the stage and the audience, so too the *hanamichi* is a locale of isolation. This, in turn, has its effect upon the audience:

Even when the *hanamichi* is not being used, the concern with keeping actors *isolated in space* requires that a relatively extended acting area be used. As a result, the audience does not see the performance as a concentrated whole, for the attention of a member of the audience may shift alternately from an actor five feet away to one fifty feet away. The visual readjustment contributes much to the audience's sense of the liveliness of the performance, but it also creates a lack of visual continuity; the performance is realized in a succession of bits of the play isolated in space.²⁴

The effect in Kabuki is not only one of liveliness, but also one of freedom from the restraints that face the Western theatre. Only the

²³ Eisenstein, p. 23.

²⁴ Ernst, p. 77.

Kabuki frees itself from representational space through the use of multiple sets, backdrops and curtains. Even the Noh stage with its *hashigakari*, the equivalent of the *hanamichi*, does not achieve the same intimacy, for the *hashigakari* leads parallel to (and so endlessly away from) the audience. Eisenstein isolates his characters in space as well: the strikers enclosed in the factory yard in *STRIKE*, the sailors under the tarpaulin on the quarterdeck in *POTEMKIN*. But the effect is the opposite of that achieved in Kabuki. With the Kabuki plays the physical space is defined and limited; the effect, then, is one of freedom. In Eisenstein's film where the physical space is potentially limitless, the effect is one of enclosure, of claustrophobia. The difference is montage. The *hanamichi* is designed for single moments; the equivalent in Eisenstein would be the shot. And Eisenstein never sees the shot as independent of either the shot that precedes it or the shot that follows it, but always in conjunction with those shots: in clusters.

Yet the transformation at the *shichi-san* of the *hanamichi* finds its exact equivalent in Eisenstein. That transformation does not involve two separate actions, but only one, which is to be seen in two different ways: as belonging to the character before the action and as belonging to the changed character after the action. One image, two ideas in collision: superposition (Pound) or montage (Eisenstein).

Earle Ernst sees further parallels between the *hanamichi* and film:

Exists and entrances on the *hanamichi* have a similar feeling of filmic "fading in" and "fading out." As the actor moves along the *hanamichi* to the *shichi-san* the form of the character becomes progressively stronger, while when he moves away from the *shichi-san* to the rear of the *hanamichi* the reverse is true... Considered in its complete function, the *hanamichi* "fades" the actor into the sharply focussed action of the play on the stage and "dissolves" him out of it, to a certain degree, in a literal, visual sense, but more strongly in the sense of the character's impact upon the audience.²⁵

Beyond the similarities in the use of physical space, there are parallels to be drawn in terms of typage as well. The use of typage, which presupposes certain stereotypes, ironically frees the Kabuki actor and the Eisenstein capitalist or worker from awkward intro-

²⁵ Ernst, p. 78.

ductions, from having to create a past for the audience, from having to bring the spectator up-to-date. At the same time, because it is based upon stock types, typage creates both a familiarity with the character and a certain emotional distance from the character. The familiarity comes from immediate recognition: the samurai in Kabuki or the capitalist in Eisenstein. The distance derives from the fact that a type is an extreme; few spectators can identify personally with Kumagai in *THE BATTLE OF ICHINOTANI* or with the factory director in *STRIKE*.

Typage also tends to de-emphasize "story" or narrative, emphasizing instead the ancient mimetic of sensation and environment, structure over content, acting over the actor. Typage predetermines that the stockholders will refuse the strikers' demands in *STRIKE*, that the "Patriarch" will curse the rebellious sailors in *POTEMKIN*, that the cadets in charge of defending the Winter Palace will loot the palace of all its silverware in *OCTOBER*. Even individuals who are not immediately recognizable as types are forced to conform to a kind of typage. For example, Kerensky is characterized, not by any individual actions so much as by the title—"The Dictator"—which prepares us for the images of the statue with laurel wreath and the peacock, images applicable to any dictator, not just to Kerensky.

In Kabuki, typage effects are enhanced by the make-up and costume of the actors. There are prescribed shades of white cream to be worn by different actors, depending upon their station or class (whether they're old women or young warriors, priests or demons, etc.). Likewise, there are prescribed sizes, shapes and colors of costumes that correspond to the character type. Such prescribed notions of make-up and costume also determine to a large extent the possible movements of the actor.

These prescribed "codes" of make-up and costume in Kabuki translate to "codes" of dress, facial tint, coiffure and personal accessories in Eisenstein's typage. Thus, the workers in *STRIKE* have bronzed, well-shaven faces. They are robust, simply dressed. They never smoke. They seem to come straight from the peasants in the pages of Karemzin or Tolstoy. On the other hand, the capitalist stockholders wear fashionable suits. Often they wear top hats. Their faces are pale in contrast to those of the workers, for they spend all their time indoors at a desk or in a lounge chair. They have moustaches or goatees. They often wear monocles like the pince-nez

of Dr. Smirnov in POTEMKIN. They are usually too thin or too fat. They are very talkative, quick to judge, prone to fits of temper. They drink wine (or throw it away, as in STRIKE), while the workers drink vodka, when they drink at all. They are often seen with women of high society or of the *demi-monde*, while the workers are most often seen apart from their women or in a family situation with children around. Capitalists are complete villains, having neither wives nor children, reminiscent to some degree of the caricature-types in Dickens.

A problem in making films with such typage, as in writing so-called proletarian literature, is that Eisenstein's workers play themselves, while the capitalists play to types. We are usually given a group portrait of the masses, while the villains—Smirnov, the Captain, the Director, Kerensky—are seen as isolated individuals. Consequently, we tend to forget the heroic masses and remember the villains. Likewise, we are more intrigued by the demons in Kabuki than by the priests. We are more likely to remember Lord Kira in CHU-SINGURA than any of the forty-seven loyal *ronin*.

Eisenstein wrote at great length about the "acting without transitions" in Kabuki, praising the transformations achieved through a *mie* or through *aragoto*²⁶ acting. Earle Ernst sees a link here with ancient Buddhist sculptures:

They possess, in common with the *mie*, these qualities: Their attitudes are balanced and self-contained in the use of the antagonistic muscles, so that tension and intensity of expression are their chief characteristics; since the movement is self-contained, the attitude is defensive rather than offensive; the crossing of the eyes, according to the Japanese, concentrates the line of the eyes in a single direction and thus intensifies the expression; the drawing down of the corners of the mouth (which is accentuated in the Kabuki by makeup) creates a grim expression which intimidates the aggressor. The legs, hands, and arms of the *aragoto* hero are made-up in stylized designs in red and white to indicate the tension of muscles and veins.²⁷

This stylized *gestus*, along with the change in costume, translates into two distinct kinds of *mie* in Eisenstein: that of the grim, self-

²⁶ *Aragoto* acting, according to Ernst, is "rough business": muscular, vigorous, highly stylized postures.

²⁷ Ernst, p. 178.

contained close-ups of the workers in *STRIKE* or the sailors in *POTEMKIN*, and that of the quick-change close-up, in which a woman in the Odessa Steps sequence is shot in the face by the Cossacks. There are two distinct kinds of exaggerated *aragoto* acting in Eisenstein as well: that embodied by the masses in action (the revolutionaries in *OCTOBER*) and that embodied by single figures, isolated in space and terrifying in their statuesque condemnation of the masses (the patriarch in *POTEMKIN* and later Ivan the Terrible).

In Eisenstein's films the *mie* and the quick-change gestures lead to two curious effects: the human beings become like statues, while the statues take on the life of human beings. Typage close-ups of the workers in *STRIKE* or the revolutionaries in *OCTOBER* accentuate the rigid faces, the stone-like quality of their struggle. On the other hand, the montage sequences of the lion statue at the Winter Palace in *POTEMKIN* and the statue of a dictator in a chair falling over in *OCTOBER* only accentuate the life of these supposedly lifeless objects, while abstracting the human beings represented by them to the level of pure idea.

In addition to the "acting without transitions," Eisenstein noted the principle of "disintegrated" acting in the Kabuki plays that could be transposed to film.

Shocho, who played the leading female roles in the Kabuki theater that visited Moscow, in depicting the dying daughter in *YASHAO* (The Mask-Maker), performed his role in pieces of acting completely detached from each other: Acting with only the right arm. Acting with one leg. Acting with the neck and head only. (The whole process of the death agony was disintegrated into solo performances of each member playing its own role: the role of the leg, the role of the arms, the role of the head.) A breaking-up into shots. With a gradual shortening of these separate, successive pieces of acting as the tragic end approached.²⁸

This disintegrated acting translates in filmic terms into analytical montage and its corresponding effect on tempo, or the times of the filmic event. Shots can be broken down into individual parts, different aspects of the same thing: close-up of clutching hands, long shot of the whole body, close-up of a terrified face, long shot of the whole body, extreme close-up of twitching mouth, etc. In reality, all of

²⁸ Eisenstein, p. 43.

these actions occur simultaneously, but through analytical montage, through the breaking down into individual components, these actions take on a certain filmic chronology unique in Western art: time is slowed down and expanded. It's as if one blew up a balloon in order to look at individual places on the balloon that would not ordinarily be visible when the balloon is deflated. What Eisenstein was arguing for, in effect, was the realization that, inflated or deflated, the balloon was the same balloon.

We have already discussed the isolation in space in Kabuki and in Eisenstein, noting the opposite effects of expansion in Kabuki and enclosure in Eisenstein. Curiously, these effects are counterbalanced in each. In Kabuki, the semblance of spatial expansion is countered by the costume, make-up and movements of the actor, all of which "fill up" the physical space around the actor. In Eisenstein's films the feeling of enclosure is off-set by the varied use of sets and camera angles. For example, Eisenstein used almost twice as many set-ups in *OCTOBER* as Pudovkin used in *THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG*, films made in the same year on the same subject.

In the Kabuki plays this filling up of space is also accomplished through the interchange of actor, narrator and musician. Rather than view the three roles as separate and distinct, we would do well to see the three roles as being just one role. The synesthesia that Eisenstein noted, then, would derive from the "mutual attraction" of the three roles, all striving to surround and capture the perfection of one role.

There is the greatest freedom of movement between the actor's voice, the narrator's voice and the music of the samisen. The narrator, like the samisen, can take over the weeping or the laughing of the actor without pause, and the actor similarly begins with no break between his speech and that of the narrator. And since this triad of expression moves within the same range of pitch, and since each has the vocal qualities of the other two, they produce a strong sense of aural continuity.²⁹

There is a gradual building-up effect in the Kabuki performance, in which each of these three components grows in rhythm, pitch and tempo with the other two. By the end of the play the actor tends to "declaim," to chant in a kind of recitative. Earle Ernst

²⁹ Ernst, p. 119.

suggests that a Western parallel might be the *sprechstimme* of Schönberg's *PIERROT LUNAIRE* or of Alban Berg's *WOZZECK*.

The suggestion is prophetic and to the point of our discussion. Both Kabuki and the films of Eisenstein possess a kind of tension common to a medium striving toward another medium or other media. It is no secret that Eisenstein saw in film the perfect medium for Wagner's *gesamtkunstwerk*, the total work of art. We know from history that Eisenstein was betrayed, both by the medium and by his government. When film moved out of the silent era and into sound, it signalled an end to Eisenstein's early experiments. Then, too, the shadow of Stalin loomed large over Eisenstein, tempering his experimental nature. The Kabuki theatre suffered a similar decline. With the end of World War Two, its popularity was replaced by the new film industry in Japan and by films which until very recently largely ignored Kabuki's rich cultural heritage to emulate their western counterparts.

The tension toward a *gesamtkunstwerk* remains, waiting to be resolved.

Book Reviews

Soviet Semiotics: An Anthology edited, translated and with an introduction by Daniel P. Lucid. Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977. Pp. viii + 259. \$16.00.

In the U. S. S. R., semiotics—the study of sign systems and signifying practices—is a lively discipline which has attracted outstanding scholars and given rise to an important body of work. *Soviet Semiotics* is an anthology of some of this work. It consists of 24 articles published between 1962 and 1974 and grouped into six sections: General Concepts, Modeling Systems, Communication Studies, Text Analysis, Art and Literature, and Typology of Culture. Some of the pieces are quite short—at least half a dozen do not run over three or four pages—and most are by scholars who are well known—if not often read—in the United States: Juri Lotman, for example, has authored or co-authored eight of the articles and Boris Uspenskij five. In an excellent introduction, Daniel Peri Lucid describes and discusses the development of semiotics in the U. S. S. R., from its early twentieth century roots in structural linguistics and formalist literary theory through its birth in the 1950's as an aid in tasks of machine translation to its coming of age as an autonomous discipline in the 1960's, with particularly active centers in Moscow and Tartu. Lucid also provides a good summary of the contents of the articles anthologized. A good bibliography of Soviet studies in semiotics and of discussions of these studies completes the volume.

Characteristic of Soviet semiotic writing is the belief that any aspect of human activity in the production, exchange and storing of information can be considered a (sub)text—a culturally meaningful system of signs—and can be studied as such: myth and religion (Zaliznjak, Ivanov and Toporov's "Structural-Typological Study of Semiotic Modeling Systems"), cartomancy (Lekomceva and Uspenskij's "Describing a Semiotic System with a Simple Syntax," B. F. Egorov's "The Simplest Semiotic Systems and the Typology of Plots"), chess (I. I. Revzin's "Language as a Sign System and the Game of Chess"), etiquette (T. V. Civ'jan's "Etiquette as a Semiotic System"), history (Uspenskij's "*Historia sub specie semioticae*"), personality (Piatigorskij and Uspenskij's "The Classification of Personality as a Semiotic Problem"), art (Uspenskij's "Semiotics of Art"), and so on and so forth. Texts can be grouped typologically, with the typologies originating in cultural universals and cultural universals flowing from universals in human psychology (Lotman's "Problems in the Typology of Texts" and "Numerical Semantics and Cultural Types," Lotman and Uspenskij's "Myth-Name-Culture"). Texts are modeling systems: structures of elements and of rules for combining them which constitute analogues to a given reality; natural language is taken to be the primary modeling system and all other signifying structures are considered secondary

modeling systems, built in terms of and upon natural language (Lotman's "Primary and Secondary Communications-Modeling Systems," Lotman and Piatigorskij's "Text and Function"). Culture is viewed as the most comprehensive system, uniting the entire aggregate of signifying structures, and human beings are seen not only as the modelers but also as the modeled, not only as creating signs but also as created by them.

Unfortunately, equally characteristic of most of the articles making up *Soviet Semiotics* is their fondness for generalities. Though the anthology manages to suggest the tremendous implications semiotics and semiotic approaches may have for such diverse disciplines as anthropology, psychology, history, philosophy, sociology, literary analysis, or art criticism, though it addresses crucial problems (the articulation of synchronic description and diachronic description, for instance, or the segmentation of a text into primitive elements) and though it makes provocative claims (does natural language underlie all non-linguistic systems of signs? are all such systems "unnatural?"), too many of the pieces anthologized are basically programmatic ("What is to be done?"), too many take hypothesis or argument for fact (p. 30: "the collective monologue of children... has parallels in the surviving archaic features of linguistic behavior in certain tribes"; p. 35: "the transformational rules... in Chomsky's transformational grammar correspond to real features of discourse analysis and synthesis as carried out by people"; p. 41: "The sentences of language are iconic signs") and too many are (not so) ingenious translations of either well-established or uninteresting facts (cartomancy and etiquette are semiotic systems; there is an analogy between natural language and the game of chess; Ionesco's plays investigate the nature of human communication). As such, these pieces justify the attacks of those who are unimpressed by semiotics and consider it to be a mere *écriture* (as defined by the early Barthes) rather than a (nascent) science.

This is regrettable because some of the articles collected by Lucid make interesting points and make them well. Thus, Lotman's "Problems in the Typology of Texts" distinguishes nine fundamental text types in terms of social function and argues that real texts represent a complex fusion of these types; Toporov's "The Semiotics of Prophecy in Suetonius" shows how omens and prophecies govern the composition and content of Suetonius' work; and Lotman and Uspenskij's "Myth-Name-Culture" suggests that poetry and myth are antipodal and establishes interesting parallels between mythological and scientific thought. Semiotics in general and Soviet semiotics in particular can, after all, be most fascinating and valuable.

GERALD PRINCE

University of Pennsylvania

The Gothic Visionary Perspective by Barbara Nolan. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977. Pp. xviii + 268, 23 illustrations. \$16.50.

The thesis of this book is that in the twelfth century a new "perspective" or sensibility developed about visionary experiences. Artists began to create works intended to involve the viewer or reader in an experience like that of an "apocalyptic" or "anagogical" vision, one that saw the world in time and redemptive history and so included the last things. Professor Nolan begins "with descriptions of that perspective in its purest forms as it appeared in commentaries and treatises" (p. xv)—she gives most attention to commentaries on the Apocalypse by Rupert of Deutz, Joachim of Fiore, and Richard of St. Victor—and proceeds to discuss the way it appeared in the architectural ideas of Abbot Suger, the Gothic cathedral, and several illustrated manuscript Apocalypses. She doesn't argue that one manifestation caused the other, but that there was a "context of attitudes toward history, prophecy and vision developed by monastic and clerical writers of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries"; this context helps explain some features of architecture and sculpture, manuscript paintings, and literature. The literary works treated in detail are the *Vita Nuova*, *Pearl*, and *Piers Plowman*. In them we find an influence from memory systems, a use of linear narrative that tells the events of world history leading to the apocalypse, and a "double form in which a literal and allegorical sense are manifestly apparent in the poetic process" (p. 136).

Visions in earlier times, it would seem, were just something in the Bible or something that happened to some saintly figure, something to be recounted or represented with diffidence; in the twelfth century they became something that might happen to anyone, that could be simulated, that a reader or viewer could participate in. Why and how this change took place is almost impossible to know. Prof. Nolan conjectures that it had a counterpart in the Eucharist as redefined by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 (material substance was an accidental "integument" for a spiritual presence); and, too, that the role of the audience changed—"no longer detached from the narrator's vision, they share with him the irony of an untenable situation... They are expected to see both the visionary world as it is seen by the stumbling narrator and the same world in its universal or spiritual significance" (p. 141). The causes of this change in "perspective" were probably more wide-ranging, and I think she could have had more assistance from historians than she makes use of: for example, Colin Morris's study of the "emergence of the individual," R. W. Southern's concept of "scientific humanism," or the researches of Giles Constable into twelfth-century spirituality. Individual experience comes into the picture vividly in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries in any number of ways—in the monasteries the imitation of the human Christ, in aristocratic circles "courtly love," in the visual arts a new mobility and realism, in literature "psychological allegory." It's not surprising that redemptive history and eschatology became personalized too.

It is probably unfair to judge this book by its thesis. The thesis is there—something that can't always be said for scholarly books—but it keeps slipping

through one's fingers. There is a sort of logical development in the chapters, yet they are by the author's admission a series of selective essays, each of which "is also intended to exist as an independent entity" (p. xvii)—they can, she suggests, be read out of order. But it is hard to understand the order they are in. After an effective chapter that explores Gothic cathedrals and illustrated manuscript Apocalypses, we get a chapter on the *Vita Nuova*, perhaps the best and most original literary analysis in the book. This is followed by a chapter, "The Later Medieval Spiritual Quest," which treats some earlier writings in French. The author doesn't seem to explain why Dante is taken out of chronological sequence, and why Latin apocalyptic literature—Bernard of Morval's *De contemptu mundi*, for example—is ignored.

And, too, the terminology is muddy. The visionary phenomenon being described is referred to as an "experience" and a "mode"—but "mode," never defined, is used in several senses, none tied to Northrop Frye's precise use of the term. (I for one wish "mode" were banished from the critical vocabulary forever—it's in a class with "factor" and "parameter" and "in terms of": a linguistic black hole used instead of a term that has a discernible meaning.) In the book's title this phenomenon is called a "perspective," probably a linguistic black hole too. "Visionary perspective" doesn't appear until p. 44 and is not defined then or used much thereafter. The index, skimpy on subject entries, is of no help in pinning down such terms. "Gothic," by the way, evidently means nothing more than "late medieval."

The shortcomings of the book are those of its genre: it appears to belong to that increasingly prevalent genre, the Rewritten Dissertation. The exigencies of academic promotion have required that such apprentice works, once published (if at all) in discreet monograph series, go on parade as the work of seasoned craftsmen. Their writers might be better advised to let the dissertation languish and write something new: it's hard to remove from a dissertation the telltale signs of haste, pressure, befuddlement, and conflicting advice. If I am wrong about Prof. Nolan's book, it reveals a more alarming trend, that academic books are beginning to imitate dissertations—not a promising development. Herbert Lindenberger has written about another rewritten dissertation that the author "is more intent on engaging in dialogue with her mentors than in addressing a larger scholarly audience.... In speaking to one's mentors one naturally shies away from generalities one fears would seem obvious to them." This would explain why Nolan fails to lay it on the line about her terms or keep her argument in focus, and why her chapters are "independent entities." (It would explain too some small gaucheries: one book's place of publication is given as "Maryland," for example, and a paper delivered at "the 1976 Medieval Institute" is mentioned—by 1976 there would have been a dozen such Institutes.) One's mentors know everything about a dissertation because the author has explained it all to them (or they to the author) at length in their offices, usually before anything has been written; they get to be as close to the work as the author, miss details, and lose touch with what a reader wants to know.

I found this problem of communication most troublesome in that part of the book dealing with art. The author isn't an art historian and is writing chiefly

for literary scholars, but she speaks of the art as if the reader is already one step ahead of her. I found myself mostly hopping behind. "The Lamb and the One Enthroned hold the book with seven seals," we read of Figure 16. I see the One Enthroned. Ah, yes, I see the Lamb. But they are holding what look like sheets of paper, not a book, and there are no seals visible to the naked eye. Obviously there is in the writer's mind someone in the Art History Department with whom all this has been discussed. So on p. 66 we learn that one manuscript illustration "recollects St. John's vision of the Lamb and the seven-sealed book, to which Trier had devoted four full-page illustrations (Figs. 12-15), into a single dynamic composition"—but it looks to my untutored eye as if in Figure 15 the vision of the Lamb and the seven-sealed book are depicted together, so I am the less impressed by the dynamic composition. How will the untutored reader lose his innocence if writers don't foresee and answer innocent questions? Yet graduate education in the humanities leaves people more and more incapable of writing for the "general reader"—for bright graduate students, colleagues in fields other than one's own, people who want to learn.

I mention this because the book is, ironically, put forward as a piece of "reader response" criticism. Of course one can see how the sculptures of a Gothic cathedral were meant to involve the viewer in a programmatic way. A harbinger of this quality in art may well be religious writings like those of Joachim of Fiore that are "wholly personal and radically historical," that insist on "the centrality of a personal affective interaction between Revelation and the reader" (p. 25). But reading is one kind of experience, walking into a church or looking at a picture is another. Perhaps earlier Christian art sought no less to promote an "affective interaction" but did so under the conditions of a different sensibility; Nolan only wants to show what earlier art was *not* and so doesn't face this possibility. The important point isn't that Gothic art seeks involvement but *how* it does so.

In all this talk about involvement one can't help feeling that the author superimposed a "methodology" on a traditional piece of historical criticism. It isn't hard to believe that exegetes writing about the Book of Revelation "attended far more closely than had their forbears to St. John's cognitive responses to his visions, even suggesting that the reader might share the visionary's privileged experience" (p. 54f.), and that a similar tendency is discernible in manuscript painting. But who is the reader? how does he *use* the book? Professor Nolan presumes a learned reader who uses the pictures like a memory system, who views the picture first, then reads the accompanying text on the right and the gloss on the left, "step by step, and page by page." Maybe so, but what evidence is there? Might not the pictures have been viewed out of order? or shown to illiterate laymen and explained? or been admired by clergy who knew the text well and didn't bother to read along? We are told that "the illuminators...sought to draw their readers closer to vision" (p. 76), that "a Trinity colorist could create a Christ with a face of gold leaf gleaming from the page through which readers might be raised to divine contemplation" (p. 77). It seems a failure of imagination that these pictures are taken to be "a reading experience," that artists are assumed

to have been painting in gold leaf for "readers." And it is confusing to find that "the reader" and "the audience" are the same (we read on p. 82 of "the audience, turning the pages of the book"): if "reader response" critics want to calculate an artist's expectations of response, they should be more rigorous. An imagined reader is an alter ego, a solitary person turning pages, but an audience is a social group; and there are readerships and "interpretative communities" besides.

The last half of the book treats the "visionary quest" in literature—in Dante, in several French poets (Raoul de Houdenc, Huon de Méry, Rutebeuf, Deguileville), and in *Pearl* and *Piers Plowman*. As a piece of literary criticism it is all the right things—historical, interdisciplinary, "textual"; the chapters are well organized, the writing clear and graceful. But the method is linear *explication de texte* of a kind that could have been written twenty-five years ago. It would have been better, or clearer, if each chapter were an essay on the "Gothic visionary perspective" in each poem—but one has to hunt for this. One finds it in a good deal of attention to the narrator (an intermediary rather like St. John in the illustrated Apocalypses) and to the "double form" (literal and allegorical), neither of which is a surprise. Nor does the "reader response" criticism of the earlier chapters bear fruit here; it has withered on the vine. The author sprinkles references to the reader and the audience—"Will and the reader alike," "the dreamer and the audience," "Will (and perhaps the audience)," and so on. There are curious statements like "the plowman is allowed to see what neither Will nor the pilgrims nor the audience can" (if the audience can't see it, how do we know the Plowman does?). But there is no effort to show how the language and the rhetoric of the poems create a reader "in" the work, or manipulate our responses, or presuppose an imagined audience of a certain character.

Was that audience the same for all works that involved a "Gothic visionary perspective"? *Pearl* with its number symbolism and intricacy, *Piers Plowman* with its scholasticism and Latin quotes and grammatical metaphors were obviously intended for fit audience though few, but I suspect for quite different kinds of audiences. The thesis of this book proposes the rise and fall of a kind of visionary experience in art and literature, but doesn't bring it to bear upon, or find it in, the two English poems discussed. The chapters on *Pearl* and *Piers Plowman* are sensible readings, responsible, modest, making no undue claim to originality, rather minimally attentive to other critical interpretations. They don't bring the reader any closer to an understanding of what is "Gothic" about them or what the "visionary perspective" was. *Piers Plowman* is said to be the last example of the phenomenon, but the audience capable of responding to this kind of art must have lingered on: *Piers Plowman* had a continuing readership that included Spenser and Milton, but *Pearl* dropped out of sight and was not read again until the nineteenth century. Unless this was purely accidental, there must be a perspective in one poem that isn't in the other, and there must have been readers that felt the power of Langland's big shaggy work but viewed *Pearl* as a bejeweled popish reliquary.

DONALD R. HOWARD

Stanford University

Medieval French Literature and Law by R. Howard Bloch. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977. Pp. xii + 268. \$14.50.

In *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (1927), Charles Homer Haskins pointed out the connection between the resurgence of Roman law and various literary structures in the high culture of the Middle Ages. The resurgence occurs at a time when the anti-legal bent of the Cistercians and Spiritual Franciscans held popular sway. Bolognese jurists adapt the techniques of Biblical glossing and commentary to the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, and the epistolary style of the *dictamen* serves for drafting documents and legal teaching. Coevally, various *libri de causis* become sources for poetic composition. Bernard Silvestris draws on the pseudo-Quintilian *Declamationes Maiores*, and Peter of Riga comparably uses the *Controversiae* of the Elder Seneca. For vernacular literature and courtly culture, the relation is more difficult to trace. There is a social reality absent in academic verse, and the law incorporated by literature is frequently customary and traditional. The available compilations offer a retrospective view of practices rather than a source for textual borrowing. R. Howard Bloch's *Medieval French Literature and Law* examines these complex ties in the prose and verse forms of Old French and Provençal. Bloch's concern is to follow the parallel transformations of social institutions and literary forms from the crisis of feudalism through the emergence of a courtly ethos.

The opening chapters analyze the problematic relations of individual to society and aristocracy to monarchy. Bloch finds in the thirteenth-century *La Mort le roi Artu* a paradigm of the "crisis of values and institutions" that had developed over a century and a half. The collapse of Arthur's kingdom would result not from fate or passions but directly from the failure of its legal system. Immanent justice, based on accusation and the judicial duel, proves vulnerable to subversion and bad faith: in the romance Arthur oversteps his role as judge, and Lancelot willingly perjures himself. But Bloch locates the defect "at the epistemological root" of the system: "Simply stated, the outcome of combat exists independently of the notion of cognitive truth." Customary procedures, unlike *ius scriptum*, are not concerned with reconstructing events, weighing intention, or judging proof rationally. Their inability to prevent recurrent violence assumes political dimensions in the feudal epics where the disputes of barons evolve a cycle of vendetta prompted in some measure by a sovereign's injustice. The historical thesis is that technological advances which favor a strategy of defense in these disputes can be related to a shift in literary themes from the pursuit of vengeance to the impossible siege. Against critics who see the poems as embodiments of aristocratic or monarchic ideals, Bloch argues that the feudal epic cycle questions the very assumptions of a warrior society by emphasizing "the general failure of war" and "the price of victory."

The inquest provides an alternative to the judicial duel and warfare. Its recreating events in written form changes the legal system from accusation to mediation based on abstract notions of truth. The growth of the inquest in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries entails different social relations and

poetic models. No longer will force signal divine purpose, but "artistic" probability and rhetorical flourish prevail. Similarly, collective action gives way to individual confrontations with a state apparatus. In poetry, these developments support "a tendency to individualize, to render abstract, and to verbalize" struggles. The courtly lover becomes alienated from his lady, from other courtiers and poets, and finally from his emotions and himself. Although one might complain that the literary theme is already treated in classical elegy and satire, Bloch seeks to objectify its medieval existence by concentrating on the definitions of self implied by the shifting institutions. He would derive such features as the isolation of romance heroes or the oppositions of the *tenso* and *joc partit* from historical as well as literary impulses.

The informing principle of Bloch's analysis is that both literature and law involve the displacement of action into verbal structures. By establishing this common ground, he is able to reassess the social configurations of various genres. The legal context explains the multiple tensions in the *canço*. There the poet's appeal, though addressed to his lady, directs a claim against third parties, whether they be *lauzengers* or merely rivals. The love plea approaches disputation, and its dynamic revolves around the issues of judgment and truth. Semantically, the terms *joi* and *merci* may connect the love lyric to judicial forms of wagering and awards. In the prose romance, displacement operates in the fiction that surrounds literary creation. The Pseudo-Map cycle consciously derives its origin in the transition from *aventure* to legal records and then to a literary account. Documentation merges with mimesis, and the chivalric novel serves as a kind of deposition. The aim of such "translation" is "the fixing of the truth of the past so that it may be remembered in the future." Yet the functions of memory and preservation within a parchment bureaucracy suggest that other purposes have replaced the conservative motives of traditional cultures.

The final chapter, on "The Ideology of Courtly Love," applies the historical and literary insights to a problem that has occupied scholars since Romanticism. Bloch portrays the courtly ethos as an ideal working against the interests of the nobility who embrace it. Individualism and the interiorization of values, which literature and law foster, aid the cause of monarchy by limiting the baronial recourse to violence and class solidarity. The theological insistence on intention and choice furthers "the designation of the individual as an autonomous legal entity." In the lyric the value of *mezura* enforces these limitations, but a crucial case appears in the Tristan myth. In the story of Tristan and Iseult, Bloch finds the model "birth of subjective consciousness and the foundation of the modern state." The episode in which Marc spares the sleeping lovers emerges as an illustration of social consciousness founded on notions of guilt and personal responsibility. Its meaning lies in the implied social contract between sovereign and citizen rather than the class identity of feudalism. It is on this contrast that subsequent literature relies.

Bloch's study offers specialists and general readers a wider view of medieval French literature. The careful accounts of evolving legal institutions bring an important perspective to critical interpretation. Yet the value of the book goes beyond commentaries on the specific texts. Bloch has rightly decided to

treat law as an inclusive rather than a limiting term. The principles of medieval law, like those of its Roman predecessor, are both a model and a reflection of social reality. The study is rooted in this dialectical approach to cultural and literary developments. It thus contributes a sophisticated theory of relations to the practice of historical criticism.

ROBERT EDWARDS

State University of New York at Buffalo

Home at Grasmere by William Wordsworth, edited by Beth Darlington. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1977. Pp. xiv + 464. \$25.00.

Home at Grasmere is Wordsworth's long blank verse hymn of thanksgiving upon his retirement to the Lake District in 1799 after years of homeless wandering in the "wide waste" of the world. He began the poem in the early spring of 1800 as "Part First, Book First" of his unwritten masterpiece, *The Recluse*, but beyond that ascertainable fact lie only mists of conjecture. The poem exists in several manuscript stages of completion, and each manuscript contains sections whose dating cannot be accurately fixed. As usual, Wordsworth left us too much and too little. Some portions of the poem are constantly present; others appear from nowhere in a fragmentary draft, and whether they are copies of an earlier lost manuscript or newly indited, none can say for sure. There are clues in dating—watermarks in the paper, references in letters, stylistic mannerisms—but all told the poem presents a set of hazards that would test any editor's judgment.

The dating of *Home at Grasmere* is of particular importance because the poem claims a *present* joy and a *present* sense of purpose. We know Wordsworth never entirely lost his love of Grasmere or his desire to "preserve/Some portion of its human history," but we also know that he did lose joy as time went on, and that his sense of duty narrowed into some unlovely forms. Precise dating can suggest more accurately the shape of Wordsworth's emotional life in some of his most creative years. It can indicate the continuity of his visionary stance, and the breaks in continuity when events caused him to revise or contradict his earlier beliefs. It may inform us that he was capable of writing joyful passages while in the midst of personal grief—a discovery that might change some of our ideas about the supposed egotism of his imagination.

Beth Darlington has benefited from the work of previous scholars of this fascinating poem. Helen Darbishire reconstructed the "late" version of the poem, called MS. D, and published it as Appendix A in Volume 5 of the Oxford edition. John Finch and James Butler produced useful studies of the text. Darlington deserves ultimate credit, however, for the painstaking production of this edition, complete, as are other volumes of *The Cornell Wordsworth*, with photocopies of the chief manuscript pages and transcriptions from them *en face*. Most important, we now have the earliest full text of the poem

(MS. B), evidently completed in 1806, running alongside the familiar MS. D. As with the 1805 *Prelude*, we now can evaluate the described experiences in their primary form. Darlington has made available in their proper context some early and deleted passages that will be debated over as long as there is Wordsworth criticism.

In my book, *Ruins and Empire*, I have called attention to one of these, Wordsworth's claim

That in my day of childhood I was less
The mind of Nature, less, take all in all,
Whatever may be lost, than I am now. (B. 94-96)

Written sometime (probably 1800-1801) between the backward-looking "spots of time" which became *The Prelude, 1798-1799*, and the nostalgia of the first stanzas of the *Intimations Ode*, this affirmation of Adamic joy seems a precarious and poignant moment in the history of Wordsworth's self-analysis. Like other passages in *Home at Grasmere* it articulates a satisfaction with adult experience that wavered and finally vanished as family, friends, and landscape lost their radiant appeal to his mind's eyes. Wordsworth would never again make claims like these from the newly-published manuscript:

In this majestic, self-sufficing world,
This all in all of Nature, it will suit,
We said, no other [] on earth so well,
Simplicity of purpose, love intense,
Ambition not aspiring to the prize
Of outward things, but for the prize within—
Highest ambition. In the daily walks
Of business 'twill be harmony and grace
For the perpetual pleasure of the sense,
And for the Soul—I do not say too much,
Though much be said—an image for the soul,
A habit of Eternity and God. (B. 204-215)

This is clearly the period of Wordsworth's maximum optimism, sustained only a few years, which gave birth to the famous Prospectus, "On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life." Darlington confidently dates this latter discursive passage during the Grasmere years, rather than 1798-99, as some previous commentators have suggested.

Home at Grasmere emerges as one of the sunniest of English poems, a pure expression of Hope in which the traditional heaven-haven of religious verse has been naturalized to a terrestrial location in England's green and pleasant land. We see the piety in the domestic dramas of the early draft, which the poet later transferred to *The Excursion*. We see the devotional fervor of Wordsworth's description of the birds whirling gracefully over Grasmere lake, a passage acutely analyzed by Karl Kroeber in *Romantic Landscape Vision*. And finally, this edition allows us to see Wordsworth breaking through the limits of his naturalized imagination as he (against his own will, one feels) converts the beloved scene before him into a religious emblem:

A symbol of Eternity & heaven
 Nor have we been deceived: thus far the effect
 Falls not below the loftiest of our hopes
 Tis not in holy Nature to betray
 Or disappoint her genuine Votary
 My trembling Heart acknowledges her Power
 To be divine; & therefore infinite. (p. 355)

Wordsworth never included this fragment in any full draft of the poem, but its existence informs us of one spiritual mode, or rather one terminological mode, that he needed to excise. That, in turn, is another clue to his poetic development.

Not all the transcriptions of cancelled passages are so interesting, of course. Some are entirely useless:

What [?] [? life]
 [?] [? as ? above ?] [?] (p. 237)

Fragments like this are given a full page, as if they were pieces of the true cross. Art is our religion, and no better proof can be offered than the scrupulous exactitude of editions like this one. Fortunately none of the apparti interfere with the reading text, printed separately, and Wordsworth scholars cannot help but be grateful even for scraps.

The serviceable quality of Darlington's edition—I particularly appreciate the notes on all transcribed pages which key passages into the reading text—should enhance the reputation of *Home at Grasmere*. Early critics took the poem at Wordsworth's own apparent valuation—they left it virtually untouched, with the exception of William Minto, whose appraisal of 1889 has been reprinted in *Wordsworth's Mind and Art*, ed. A. W. Thomson (1969). "The verse is of the poet's prime," he noted, "a fragment of that impassioned history" which Wordsworth undertook to narrate in *The Prelude*. Critics of the latter poem now have no reason to neglect this companion work, coeval in composition, comparable (at its best) in poetic beauty and psychological interest, a new star in the constellation of Wordsworth's major writings.

LAURENCE GOLDSTEIN

The University of Michigan

The Victorian Critic and the Idea of History: Carlyle, Arnold, Pater by Peter Allan Dale. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1977. Pp. 295. \$13.50.

Sophisticated critical and scholarly investigation of Victorian literature probably can be dated from the appearance of Jerome H. Buckley's *The Victorian Temper* in 1951. Challenging the connotations of "Victorianism," nearly all disparaging, the book helped clear the way for an objective and less apologetic view of the literature of the period. Now, after more than a quarter-century of immense scholarly activity, we know in a general sense what the Victorians

thought; we are aware of their shared ideas. What still remains to be determined is the manner of Victorian thinking, the process by which common ideas were conceived. In an important essay—"The Formal Nature of Victorian Thinking," *PMLA*, 90 (1975), 904-18—Gerald L. Bruns has argued that the distinctive feature of the Victorian mind is the way in which history is made to function as a formal property of thought. Examining Carlyle, Arnold, and Ruskin, Bruns shows that for the Victorian prose writers the meaning of an idea is inseparable from its history.

Although apparently unaware of Bruns's essay and of other recent literature on the subject (about which I shall say more later), Peter Allan Dale in *The Victorian Critic and the Idea of History* touches on many of Bruns's ideas to demonstrate how historicism affected Victorian theories about the nature of art. Investigating works by Carlyle, Arnold, and Pater, Dale is concerned with "the philosophical manifestation of the historical sense" especially as it is reflected in the three authors' thoughts on aesthetics.

The Introduction delineates the dimension of historicism in the nineteenth century. It shows how, replacing physics and metaphysics, the historical process was set up as the most likely venue to an explanation of experience, although ultimately a thorough-going historicism, with its insistence that history is the end of knowledge beyond which the human mind cannot go, was rejected by nearly all nineteenth-century thinkers.

Each author is treated in a section comprised of two chapters. The first chapter examines the sources of and influences on the author's thinking about history—the formation of his philosophy, in other words—and the second demonstrates how the writer's historical views inform his critical position. Each critic is examined with reference to three concerns: the genetic approach to criticism—that is, the relation between art and historical or cultural forces; the role of art in society, specifically how it affects systems of belief; and the concept of aesthetic value, especially the effort to find firm grounds for evaluation of art. In the last analysis Dale is interested in discovering how each of the three critics reconciled himself intellectually and emotionally to the implications of a historicity showing continuously changing beliefs and values through time.

From the German Idealists Carlyle learned that "clothes," or systems of belief in time, are emanations of the Divine Mind outside of time. Hence if a mythus fails, a new mythus will arise, phoenixlike from the ashes of the old, so that man can be delivered spiritually. The function of the poet is to penetrate the veil thrown up by the Time-Spirit to discover things as they really are, the Divine Idea. For Carlyle the test of a work of art is its ability to induce in the reader belief in the Idea that the work expresses. But, as Carlyle was aware, the degree of penetration is limited by historical conditions, and to overcome this difficulty in his aesthetic theory he flirted with the notion that the poet's special talent lies in his figurative or symbolic expression. Yet in the end, because of a lack of critical sensitivity and because of his preoccupation with overcoming the world of the Not-Self, Carlyle rested his aesthetic theory on the truth-telling role of art.

Matthew Arnold learned from his father and ultimately from Vico the

concept of the cyclical periodization of history. Unlike Carlyle he was disconcerted by the spectacle of the endless passing of systems of belief; he could not give credence to the idea that the process emanates from the Divine. For him the developing *Zeitgeist* is a purely secular process. Yet, retaining a basically religious longing for a stillpoint amidst the whirling flux of history, Arnold fixed upon the concept of the harmoniously developed Best Self, a concept taken from the Stoics and Spinoza, which is independent of the process of changing ideas. Hence religious belief is to be valued in so far as it supports the psychological and moral organization of the mind, the belief itself being emotionally a sort of feeling and intellectually an illusion which refers to no reality outside itself. Reflected in his poetics, this view causes Arnold to stress not the truth-telling role of art, as in Carlyle, but its ability to evoke moral and emotional attitudes in the reader. How does art do this? By form, architectonics, the grand style. Locating value in the supposed permanent emotional and moral needs of the personality, Arnold in effect denies the historical element in the work of art. He does not consider how the capacity to experience the inner peace of Dante's "In la sua volontade è nostra pace" can exist without faith in the medieval Christianity which inspired it.

Tracing Pater's intellectual development, Dale locates the later Victorian critic within the empiricist tradition. He is particularly illuminating in his discussion of Pater's debt to John Stuart Mill, although in my opinion he does not give sufficient prominence to the elements of Oxford idealism in the critic's thought. As an empiricist of Epicurean tendency, Pater made no attempt to transcend history: he accepted the historical process and looked for no spiritual reality behind it. Hence he relied on sensuous and emotional experience as the only experience of which we can be certain. Yet at the same time, in an effort to get beyond this, he embraced the concept of the continuously developing culture of the race as a value in itself. Ultimately he was little at ease with the complete historicist position. As a critic he focussed on the direct sensuous and emotional experience conveyed by art. He believed that from the perspective of his own *Weltanschauung* the artist experiences the sensible world, whose impression he assimilates and imitates so fully that his art becomes pure perception. The value of an art object thus resides in an inarticulate sensuous and formal condition, a complete unity of idea and expression.

Following the section on Pater a short Conclusion, in which the author sums up his treatment of the three critics and suggests their importance, closes the book.

The summary I have provided in no way does justice to Dale's book and the complexity of treatment of the three Victorian critics. Although the book is arranged in three chief sections devoted to one figure each, it would be a mistake to read only the section on Arnold, say, to see what the author has to say about this particular critic. It would be a mistake because the book must be read in its entirety. For it is not only a study of Carlyle, Arnold, and Pater; it is also an investigation of the historicist outlook in Victorian England and, further, an effort to trace how Victorian critics attempted to

make of poetry a variety of religious experience. No other work with which I am familiar does this so well. I commend it highly to all who are interested in Victorian intellectual history and in Victorian aesthetic theory.

I could wish, however, that Dale had addressed himself to the implications of Bruns's article mentioned earlier, because I believe that the book would have been even better had Dale attempted to go just one step further and show how history functions in the case of Carlyle, Arnold, and Pater as a *formal* property of thought. He comes close to doing this but never quite gets to it. It may be unfair to charge him with neglect of Bruns's essay because it may be that his study was submitted to the Harvard Press in 1975 and that it took the Press two years to produce the book. Yet I wonder about this. For when I look at the notes I find allusion to no work published later than 1972. Dale is presumably unfamiliar with, for example, Abbott Ikeler's *Puritan Temper and Transcendental Faith: Carlyle's Literary Vision* (1972), David DeLaura's essay "Matthew Arnold and the Nightmare of History" (Stratford-upon-Avon Studies XV [1974]), or Harold Bloom's introduction to the *Selected Writings of Walter Pater* (1974)—all of which are pertinent to his concerns and the ideas of which one would have liked for him to engage. Could it be that Dale completed an earlier form of this study by 1972 and in reworking it did not keep up with the scholarship published during his revision?

I could also wish that the book did not frequently suggest an underlying polemical purpose. Carlyle, Arnold, and Pater seem to be judged as thinkers and critics by the degree to which they approached complete historicism. Hence Carlyle is said to have "failed to satisfy the vanguard minds of the succeeding generation" who were "to seek their interpretations of life in the realms of philosophical and scientific thought rather than in intuition and fideism; to look to human nature and human society as the ultimate grounds for belief rather than to an otherworldly Absolute" (pp. 86-87). Hence it is hinted that Arnold's work is limited because "Arnold, like Carlyle before him, ... obviously continues to believe in the possibility of achieving a new formula of belief that will deliver society from the abyss of relativism" (p. 168). Hence Pater is applauded because "like Mallarmé Pater is working against all metaphysical and intellectuallist approaches to the spiritual principle in art" (p. 219). In his summation Dale says:

the critics I have been discussing [turned] to poetry...more and more...as a substitute for the concept of belief itself. Whatever the value of this enterprise as a criticism of life, its value for criticism was extremely important. By undermining the concept of belief itself the historicist outlook at the same time undermined the ancient assumption that poetry is a variety of truth or knowledge, closer to philosophy than to history. In this its tendency was ever to compel critical attention back upon more specifically aesthetic criteria for the discussion of art and to liberate art from subservience to criteria more suitably applied elsewhere. (p. 255)

Thus Carlyle, Arnold, and Pater appear to be important as critics because they prepared the way for twentieth-century formalism; they seem to be

important as historical thinkers because they anticipate the complete historicism of Collingwood, Croce, Dilthey, Meinecke, and Ortega. One comes away from the book with the impression that Dale finds his three Victorian subjects interesting and valuable just to the degree they depart from the transcendental thinking of the Romantics and point towards the positivism of the present century.

Whatever reservations I have about the book are, however, comparatively minor, and in stating them I do not mean to give the impression that I do not value Dale's work highly. *The Victorian Critic and the Idea of History* is an important book. In my estimation it is one of the most valuable studies of Victorian literature published in recent years. During a period like the 1970's when the historical dimension of literature is increasingly regarded as a significant area of study Peter Allan Dale's book, with its learning and its clarity of expression, is especially welcome, because it can serve as a model for the kind of literary-historical scholarship that one would like to see produced.

CLYDE DE L. RYALS

Duke University

Charles Churchill by Raymond J. Smith. New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1977. Twayne Series. Pp. 156. \$8.50.

Graduate students, as they prepare nervously for examinations, often give one another sample questions. The questions I remember had either a trick ("what is the great epic poem of the Restoration?"), or a joke ("who is the oldest dog in literature"?), or else probed the gaps in which only minor authors are found ("name the most important English satirist between Pope and Byron"). This was the context in which one learned about Charles Churchill, and for most, he remained only a name, mattering little more than Hector the Toothless Hound, the name of Natty Bumppo's dog.

Those who bothered to read Churchill, however, would be pleasantly surprised. Here was a writer of immense vigor and considerable skill, who poured out words in torrents and lashed victims by the score: an entertaining man at the very least, good value for time spent, especially among the poets of the later eighteenth century. The careful reader would find every requisite of the satirist's art: a sophisticated satiric persona, biting enemy portraits, clever fictions, skillful verse, effective words and figures, interesting shifts of tone and point of view, moral earnestness and a sense of humor. His performances, furthermore, seem better to fulfill the canons of his own time than the performances of Pope. If the satirist shall tell the truth, he is much more literal than Pope; if the satirist shall be a good man with no secret envies, he is more forthright than Pope; and if the satirist shall be heartily angry at vice, Churchill is so handsomely direct as to make Pope seem devious by comparison. Yvor Winters could declare that Churchill's last poem, the "Dedication" to Warburton, was better than anything in Pope and Dryden combined.

Yet Churchill remains neglected, perhaps because his excellences fade when we put down his book. They are genuine, but they are diluted. His satiric persona runs dangerously close to self-indulgence; his portraits bite, but they lose force when they chew some detail to a pulp and leave the essence untouched; a clever fiction, if pressed too hard, will cease to seem clever. Churchill flows so copiously that skillful lines and effective words get swamped among the ordinary; and his shifts of tone sometimes seem random. The eighteenth-century canons of satire, despite their popularity, are crude: a satirist, like other poets, needs a shaping imagination first, "truth," candor, and anger second; Churchill is more forthright than he is inventive. Despite the praise of Winters and a fine edition by Douglas Grant, studies of Churchill have been few: a book, a handful of articles, and now, this second book, written for Twayne.

Being a book about a neglected figure, it is obliged to make him as interesting and attractive as it can. Being a book for Twayne, it is required to summarize each work in chronological order. The second concern cannot help the first. Churchill's virtues do not shine forth in methodical summaries of his themes and occasions, and his significance does not appear in brief, judicious estimates of each poem's success or failure. The reader who does not know Churchill's work already will get some sense of it this way, but not a lively one, nor can a book of this kind make him eager to read it. But this is to criticize the format more than Professor Smith: his information is accurate, his judgments are unpretentious; his prose is lucid. The reader who needs the political and personal background of the poems will find it here, and in those spaces where the format allows it, the literary historian can find some interesting and helpful things to think about.

Professor Smith's analysis gives us a satirist who makes the conventional points one expects in Augustan satire, uses its devices with ease, alludes to its entire range, abides by its canons. Churchill asserts "reason," just as he is supposed to do, but as Smith points out, he actually defines what he means by it, and this turns out to be his own, individual reasoning, not some established order to be taken for granted. The result is nearly to reverse what one finds in Dryden and Pope: Churchill asserts the individual, not society; idiosyncrasy, not constraint. His creed is rational freedom, but not in the style of Dryden's cousin at Chesterton or of Pope in his grotto; he celebrates the genteel excess and insouciant freedom of John Wilkes. He can stay within the canons of Augustan satire and resemble in tone and demeanor that most "un-Augustan" of writers, Laurence Sterne. All of this is cause for thought: do "pre-Romantic" experiments come about because an author adheres *more* closely than before to the standards that Augustans profess?

Smith alludes to another matter more interesting still: Churchill, in certain places, has a trick of dissolving words. He employs them in ironic contexts and at the same time exploits in them a kind of "doubleness" (p. 32) which makes us unable to be sure that they have their meanings any longer. They may mean one thing, or they may mean its opposite: what force they have depends entirely on the author's mind, and the author, being ironic, speaks indirectly. At its best, in the Warburton poem, this technique puts us

directly in contact with the moral circumstances that concern the poet: our effort to understand him makes us judge them as if for ourselves. At other moments, Churchill's prolixity dilutes the effect. But here is where Churchill is genuinely post-Augustan. Dryden and Pope could assume that words have meanings—fixed, objective significances to which their users ought to be responsible. Pope did not expect such responsibility in the world outside his grotto, but he did expect it of his readers, for they share the grotto with him. Churchill not only does not expect it—at these moments, at least—but does not value it; he enjoys the problem of subject and object, for his rational freedom to make the world what he will is his *summum bonum*: tyranny is what frightens him, not chaos.

Professor Smith cannot dwell on such topics for long, for he is soon required to sum up and get on with the next poem. Format summons, and he must obey. But the book has value. It does not persuade one to read Churchill for the first time, which is a pity, but it steadily helps those who are doing so, and intermittently, it speaks to those who have done so already.

ALAN FISHER

University of Washington

The Chronicle of Leopold and Molly Bloom: Ulysses as Narrative by John Henry Raleigh. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977. Pp. xi + 293. \$12.50.

Joyce's Ulysses and the Assault upon Character by James H. Maddox, Jr. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1978. Pp. xi + 244. \$14.00.

Joyce's Moraculous Sindbook by Suzette A. Henke. Columbus, Ohio: University Press, 1978. Pp. xi + 267. \$15.00.

The title of John Henry Raleigh's book, *The Chronicle of Leopold and Molly Bloom*, describes what it is; the subtitle, *Ulysses as Narrative*, what it is not—unless Raleigh means by narrative that the years between 1865, the beginning of the Chronicle proper, and 1904, the year in which the action of *Ulysses* is set, follow each other in predictable sequence. As a chronicle, Mr. Raleigh's book tells us most everything we might want to know about the Blooms and a good deal about which many readers of *Ulysses* ought to care less. We learn of the Blooms' ancestry and family history, of their respective childhoods, of their courtship, their friends, their attitudes and opinions about nearly everything (much of the Chronicle consists of reproduction chunks of the text of *Ulysses* rearranged chronologically when possible and topically when chronology is irrelevant). Although much of the material Raleigh records, including the usual run of Dublin arcana, details of timing and placement, inconsistencies in the narrative, volitional and non-volitional errors by Joyce

and/or his characters, is collected in other reference books and in numerous articles on *Ulysses* scattered hither and yon, Raleigh's useful innovation is chronology. He literally lets the naturalism of *Ulysses* follow its course. Therefore the Chronicle begins in the year 1865, the year Rudolph Virag arrives in Dublin and subsequently conceives his son, Leopold Bloom (Virag changed his name in 1866). And the Chronicle ends with two appendices, one a list of Bloom's addresses beginning in 1866, and another a chronological list of Bloom's jobs beginning in 1881 and continuing to the book's present.

Raleigh claims he began work on the Chronicle as a hobby during the years he was an administrator at the University of California, Berkeley. A hobby is usually obsessive and a hobbyist usually gets his facts right. Raleigh scores on both counts. The book is filled with the minutiae, quiddities, and accidents of over forty years of a *fictional* couple's history (I emphasize *fictional* because somewhere along the line Raleigh has lost the distinction between literary characters and real people). Insofar as accuracy goes, the Chronicle is relatively error free. There are a couple of lapses on p. 72 and p. 77 where we are told after separate entries first to see pp. 00 above and then p. 00 below, a nifty trick in either case. But for the most part Raleigh is accurate. He is also, by turns, fascinating and maddening. After a helpful excursus, for example, into the Hungarian byways (paternal side) of Bloom's family history, including a report on the theory of naming in eighteenth-century Hungary and a speculation on Joyce's habits of transliterating names, Raleigh records the name Karoly as that of Bloom's maternal grandfather. Claiming to "know Joyce," Raleigh guesses "that Karoly was not the original name which the father of Higgins changed to Karoly." Since the name Karoly is mentioned only once in *Ulysses*, there is no fictional context for worrying over this matter. Here and elsewhere Raleigh goes too far—he assumes that a narrative record has a naturalistic life of its own even when the interpretive reward for such speculation is nil. Raleigh's obsession with the pre-life and "after-life" of literary characters is of a different order than, say, Hugh Kenner's recent speculation about unnarrated events during the day of *Ulysses*, events that we can assume have taken place and that directly affect narrative context. Much of Raleigh's speculation affects nothing. Later in the Chronicle we learn that the month of Bloom's proposal to Molly is not mentioned in *Ulysses*. But Raleigh very much wants it to be May. Naturally, he tabulates the number of times each month is mentioned in the text and concludes that May wins the day (or the month, as the case "may" be). The fact that two occurrences of May in the text refer not to the month but to Mary (May) Dedalus does not daunt Raleigh in the least. Rather, it's his "last point" in an argument that has lost touch with logic and skirts perilously close to parody. May, it seems, was the familiar name of Joyce's mother, thus proving that Bloom proposed to Molly in May.

Raleigh will obsess over these things—that is the way he reads *Ulysses*. But I am less bothered by Raleigh's perception of "real" or recordable detail (present or absent in the text) than with his strange conception of his book as an introduction to *Ulysses as Narrative* (subtitle). Along with some statements in the introduction to the Chronicle, the subtitle misleads the unsuspecting

reader about the contents, format, and utility of Mr. Raleigh's book. Even though Joyce, as Raleigh points out, was interested in naturalism and lectured on the naturalism of Defoe's work, the recovery of naturalistic sequence does not justify billing Raleigh's book as a guide to narrative issues in *Ulysses*. In his prefatory statements, Raleigh protests too much. The first among multiple purposes for the Chronicle suggests that the book is "to serve as an introduction to Joyce for the uninitiated who are, understandably, intimidated by the bulk and complexity of *Ulysses* in *tota*." Later, Raleigh advises that "the Chronicle is no substitute for the novel, merely an introduction," as if anyone would misperceive it as a substitute. The mere idea suggests priorities have gone awry. Like other reference or guide books, the Chronicle can provide information for both the uninitiated and the initiated, it can put matters of narrative event into chronological sequence, it can clear up beclouded fictional history. But finally, it is an adjunct to *Ulysses* not an introduction to it. Those who have some experience with *Ulysses* are not likely to be taken in by Raleigh's half-hearted attempt to foist his book off as something it is not. Those who come to *Ulysses* thinking Raleigh's book will tell them something about narrative are in for a surprise.

If Mr. Raleigh's subtitle is misleading, James Maddox's title, *Joyce's Ulysses and the Assault upon Character*, is simply less elegant than his book. Just who is assaulting whom? I think Maddox means assault in several senses: assault as an attempt, a means of "getting at" character; but also, especially in the radically stylized chapters of *Ulysses*, an attack on the notion of centrality in representing character in the novel. But "assault" is the wrong word for Joyce whose aesthetic sympathies, like his politics, were pacific by design. If, however, Maddox means the assault in his title to refer to his own rather than Joyce's treatment of character, then I think he misperceives his own critical finesse. Maddox is not an assault artist—he is less the Rocky Marciano of Joyce criticism than its Sugar Ray Robinson.

Maddox's choice for a title bears upon an assumption controlling his book, an assumption stated explicitly early on. Maddox belongs to the school of Joyce whose spiritual leader is S. L. Goldberg, to whom Maddox alludes in the space of a few pages as overwhelming, definitive, brilliant, elegant, and aesthetically hoarding (Goldberg keeps "the baby with the bath water"). Like Goldberg, Maddox is bothered by the "encyclopedic" *Ulysses* whose various and distorted styles detract from the *sine curve* of character. He writes emphatically though, to his credit, less often than Goldberg of "the severe limitations of these styles which have lost touch with their subject matter" (p. 186). Oddly enough, Maddox even likes some of the chapters he feels compelled to question; nevertheless the assumption that *Ulysses* risks losing touch with its subjects (literally, its people) governs the argument and organization of the book. Maddox discusses *Ulysses* by re-arranging its chapters on the basis of a kind of character quotient. Those chapters with most "character," so to speak, get discussed first. It is not in the least surprising that Maddox is better, much better, on those sections of *Ulysses* stylistically closer to the consciousness of its characters. His treatment of

Stephen in *Proteus*, for example, is extraordinarily supple, one of the best readings of that chapter available; and his reading of the early Bloom chapters is first-rate. Maddox is also excellent on a later chapter like *Nausicaa*, a bit of a breather as prelude to the complicated night chapters to follow. Generally, Maddox is weak and tired in his treatment of the larger, encyclopedic, and parodic chapters of *Ulysses*. He is a good enough critic to provide some trenchant observations about *Aeolus*, *Wandering Rocks*, *Sirens*, *Cyclops*, *Oxen of the Sun*, *Circe*, and *Ithaca*, but for the most part he fights old battles, rehashes old material, and seems anxious to get on with what he does well, to return to the consciousness (his consciousness and theirs) of character. Maddox sees character (and what it constitutes) as the primary form of *Ulysses*.

Characters are "souls" with marking and idiosyncratic rhythms. Joyce's fiction records sets of relationships among a soul and its rhythms, its surrounding physical world, its record or memory, its incremental patternings (authorial allusions, archetypes, and correspondences). What makes the matter of character fictionally generative for Maddox is the paradoxical notion that while the "soul" is essentially ineffable, indefinable, irreducible, numinous, mysterious, and in spiritual motion, the fictional stuff of Joyce's world is anything but ineffable—it is materially and historically reproduced; it is physically and artistically textured. So the guiding technique of Joyce's representing method presents a character (soul) knowable by repeated sets of relations with things around or surrounding it, from controlled epiphanies to focused correspondences (parallax) to kinds of interchangeability (metempsychoses). Maddox explains: "Joyce's art is the art of the unspoken, an art of surround and periphery, implying and evoking but never naming the center" (p. 12). "Whether we are speaking of the epiphany, of characterization, of the manipulation of style, or of the use of correspondences, the primary configuration within *Ulysses* is the same: a collocation of details which point toward an unnamable center" (p. 15).

Maddox's ideas about character may focus on ineffable centers, but they do not produce ineffable results. As a critic, he is precise, clear, intelligent, resourceful, and generative. Although he is too generous and too thorough in presenting, repeating, and reformulating the strategies of others (Noon's Aquinian speculations, Goldberg's Joycean aesthetics, Ellmann's triangulations), the patient reader will endure just to see Maddox rekindle sparks of interest from the dying embers of the obvious. The book is filled with throwaways as productive as the winner of the Gold Cup race. Stephen, as Maddox points out with economical precision, acts as if he has a need to be watched. Maddox gets him right. Bloom operates by a kind of internal gyroscope. Maddox sees Bloom's essential rhythm as "self-dispersal and reassimilation." Simon Dedalus is wonderfully described as a "synecdoche for his city." Maddox suggests that the declension of Bloom's name in *Circe* is something of an epic descent (or decline). In *Cyclops*, Bloom's lot is given paradoxical formulation: "the unbenefitting apostle of compassion." Maddox cleverly marks *Nausicaa* as a turning point in the novel, the difference, so to speak, between day and night. On a few occasions, almost too few to mention, Maddox nods. I wish he would not have referred to the jargon "solution of his [Bloom's]"

life-problem." Even more, I wish he had not said "But then wham" in reference to one of Molly's quick transitions. And I wish there were a little less bowing and scraping at the feet of S. L. Goldberg. These are minor matters. Maddox has written a good book.

Suzette Henke's title, *Joyce's Moraculous Sindbook*, is neither misleading nor inappropriate; it's simply portmanteau. "Moraculous...sindbook" is one of Joyce's many references to *Ulysses* in *Finnegans Wake*. Combining morality and miracle, sin and *sind* (German "being" in forms of the present indicative), the configured title implies a movement from ethics to what Ms. Henke sees as phenomenological transcendence. The central thesis in Ms. Henke's book is that the three main characters in *Ulysses*, unable to deal fully or satisfactorily with the pressures of the world in which they circulate, make something of a phenomenon of themselves—they move out of the physical and culture-bound world into the liberating world of the creative imagination: "In the course of the novel, the three protagonists escape from 'sin' into a realization of existential *Dasein*" (p. 10). I wonder if Bloom, reading the *Sweets of Sin* at the bookstall, would see it this way?

All important creativity for Ms. Henke is post-creative, that is, Nietzschean: "*Joyce's Moraculous Sindbook* is an attempt to re-create *Ulysses* as an existential act of mind and a phenomenological life-world" (p. 11). The characters and, presumably, the readers and perceivers of the phenomenological systems in *Ulysses* adjust to "a life-world beyond the scope of immediate experience" (p. 6). For John Henry Raleigh, the world of *Ulysses* is so real it needs a chronicle; for Suzette Henke, the referential world is the enemy and Joyce's characters in *Ulysses* are all artists waiting for their work to happen in their heads: Joyce "delights in the capaciousness of the human imagination and implies that every individual can become an 'artist of life' through myth, sympathy, and creative fantasy" (p. 12). Stephen is a "self-declared artist of the beautiful." Bloom is an "unselfconscious artist of sympathy." Molly is perhaps "the most prolific artist in *Ulysses*." Art (*art*) is democratic. Any question of craft is held in abeyance or rendered impotent (potential put behind, I suppose, since most democratic art in the book is the articulation of memory). Ms. Henke's attitude toward art as craft is something like Stephen's attitude toward work: Work? Count me out.

Joyce's characters ought to give up on their worlds because they can more profitably negotiate their own interior spaces: "Joyce's characters move from a world of psychological enclosure to an existential liberation of consciousness" (p. 12). Or, to report it another way: "The true protagonists of *Ulysses*—Stephen, Bloom, and Molly—all exult in the playground of the mind" (p. 8). One doesn't so much want to deny such a statement, one merely wants to ask, only in the mind and nowhere else? If Bloom's walks around Dublin are the "Freudian perambulations of a masochistic id," and if Molly is "the Logos that arises from sensuous experience and perpetually affirms existence in a yea-saying moment of transcendent *ekstasis*," one is forced to conclude that for Ms. Henke the important things in *Ulysses* are out of this world.

Ms. Henke has been at work on her book for seven years and seems to have cast a nearly and deciding vote for Phenomenology. She claims allegiance to Geneva (Phenomenology) and an older New critical Haven. She acknowledges as one of her champions J. Hillis Miller, the late 1960's advance man for Phenomenology in America. But Miller's Geneva lights have dimmed only to flash again in a Newer deconstructionist Haven. Henke's plight is something like that of Max Beerbohm who took several years to master the ideas of Henri Bergson only to complain that his "philosopher's" once rising star was now descendant over the horizon. Henke's problem is that she hasn't moved fast enough for Phenomenology in these, our modern moments. But she doesn't need Phenomenology. Once she sheds her jargon and banishes her sources to footnotes, she is actually a fine critic of the much more various states of mind that Joyce's characters display.

A paragraph by Henke on the choices, strains, and anxieties of Stephen Dedalus looking into a mirror is worth a chapter of phenomenological jargon. An observation that Mary Dedalus enters in upon the scene of *Ulysses* like a pre-Raphaelite painting is better than a host of debatable remarks about the liberation of consciousness. Noting that Gerty MacDowell is the perfect creature to be attracted to (and by) an ad man is both pertinent and witty. Pointing out that Bloom's sense of feminine interchangeability is so strong that for him to make love to anyone besides Molly would be a kind of incest is kinkily apt. Ms. Henke can be a good critic; her difficulties come when she absorbs herself with special phenomenological pleading. When she takes the same hostile stance towards the material and physical matter of the book that she assumes Joyce's characters take she is Cyclopean and unifocal. For example, she writes of the newspaper world of *Aeolus*: "The newspaper world is a microcosm of paralysis and of mechanistic aggression." It is that, no doubt, but the newspaper is also part of the stylistic "stuff" of *Ulysses*, an urban daily organ in a novel partly dedicated to recreating one or another daily organ from the day of its plot to the body of its *schema*. Ms. Henke is only intermittently receptive to the variety of fictional programs in *Ulysses*.

The style of *Moraculous Sindbook* is, like its title, oracular, even gnomic. Previous commentators on *Ulysses*, Ellmann and Kenner among them, share in this tendency. Ms. Henke tells us that "Bloom is an artist of compassion; Molly, an artist of passion"; "Eros is transient, agape transcendent"; "Bloom warrants our pity, but not our tears." I mention these observations not to condemn them, but to record a stylistic feature prominent in Ms. Henke's book. Some readers may find these formulations helpful.

There are two matters I would mention in conclusion. Ms. Henke, like so many critics before her, assumes without reservation that Stephen urinates on the beach in *Proteus*, although she admits that his effort (for this "relief" much thanks) "undergoes such extraordinary celebration that the physical act is barely recognizable." Perhaps it is barely recognizable because it does not happen. In a recent essay, David Hayman argues that Stephen masturbates rather than urinates, but I have yet to read an argument on this matter that convinces me the passage in question refers to anything but Stephen contemplating moving back across the tidal pool on the strand distinctly named Cock Lake

before the advancing water cuts him off. The passage in *Proteus* is usually cited as an instance of Stephen generating artistic material out of his own self, so to speak; but physical reality here seems to take precedence over the phenomenon of creativity. Another small, organic matter as so many matters, small and otherwise, are in *Ulysses*: Ms. Henke refers to Cisse Caffrey's remark about Bloom's "masterworks...out of order," and concludes that "Cisse's pun reflects the dysfunction of both timepiece and codpiece." Just what does a phenomenologist think a codpiece is?

Columbia University

MICHAEL SEIDEL

The Victim as Criminal and Artist: Literature from the American Prison by H. Bruce Franklin. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978. Pp. xxii + 337. \$13.95.

Reading Franklin's book on American prison literature makes one recall Lenin's comment that intelligent idealism is closer to intelligent materialism than is unintelligent materialism. Here is materialism so unintelligent that vulgar Marxism acquires new dimensions and reaches new depths one thought impossible, at least in a book published by an academic press. There are so many things wrong with this book that only a lengthy essay could unravel all the errors, but *The Victim as Criminal and Artist* is not important or substantial enough to deserve that much attention. (For a detailed discussion of Franklin's political and theoretical assumptions, I recommend a review by Paul Breines in *Telos*, 15 [Spring, 1973], 138-145, of *The Essential Stalin* which Franklin edited and introduced.)

Franklin's major thesis is that the real criminals have not been prison inmates but plantation owners, middle class racists, and capitalists. Whereas Eugene Debs believed that the existence of prisons was symptomatic of an unjust society and that it was a socialist goal to create a world where prisons would not be necessary, Franklin means something much simpler; in fact, Franklin never suggests that prisons ought to be abolished, which is of course one of the dominant themes of revolutionary prison literature. According to Franklin, although slavery was abolished after the Civil War, capitalism was not, so that slavery merely changed its form. If in 1850 blacks were in chains as Southern property, since then blacks have been enslaved by penal institutions. Despite so much discussion of black culture, there is no analysis whatsoever of racism; rather, racists, especially academics, are sneered at. The one important distinction he makes in a book not terribly discriminating is between the "collective revolutionary consciousness" of blacks, which he traces from Douglass to the Panthers, and "the loneliness of the isolated convict ego, branded and cast out, seeking either to reintegrate with the social order or to defy it in anarchic rebellion" (p. 262). Although some white prisoners also have what he calls revolutionary consciousness, for the most part whites tend to be conformist or individualistic. Even this idea

makes little sense if one examines the literature. For example, George Jackson turned violently against his own upbringing, family and culture, and turned toward a highly individualistic self-discipline, reading Marx, Lenin, and Mao. Jackson created a revolutionary self after bracketing out black American culture; it was only *after* becoming a revolutionary that he began to identify sympathetically with other blacks and those parts of himself he suppressed in order to become a revolutionary.

Although the book approaches a kind of black nationalism, Franklin tries to be even-handed, matching (like a Federal judge) every chapter on black culture with one on a white author. Following the first chapter on the slave narrative is a chapter on Herman Melville entitled "The Worker as Criminal and Artist." How worker Melville was able to achieve such infallible anti-capitalist lucidity while other white workers and prisoners were unable to do so Franklin does not say. Those readers who have detected a nihilistic streak in Melville's work will find Franklin dismissing out of hand all such considerations. Chapter Three is on black culture—slave songs, work songs, prison songs (on which Franklin has nothing new to say, with whatever valid insights there are coming from the scholarship of Bruce Jackson)—while the fourth chapter discusses some white prison authors in addition to black authors. Chapter Five matches white Malcolm Braly with black Chester Himes, and the last chapter discusses recent prison literature, mostly black. This absurd balancing act unsuccessfully conceals a political assumption which informs the book but which is never stated as such: the black nation, as he calls it, is the vanguard of the proletariat which will lead us in a socialist revolution. One absurdity leads to another.

Franklin advances our knowledge of prison literature not one iota, although the bibliography is extensive. The gravest weakness of the book is its peculiar kind of nationalism because prisons, especially today, are an international question. From Attica to the Gulag, from Chile to Cambodia, the issues of imprisonment, torture, crime and punishment, and social control are urgent and demand serious attention. Ideas dragged out of Depression Marxism will hardly do. Franklin discusses a large body of American literature in a way that is neither illuminating nor useful; that literature remains to be analyzed intelligently.

MICHAEL SCRIVENER

Wayne State University

Defamiliarization in Language and Literature by R. H. Stacy. Syracuse: University of Syracuse Press, 1977. Pp. xi + 193. \$14.00.

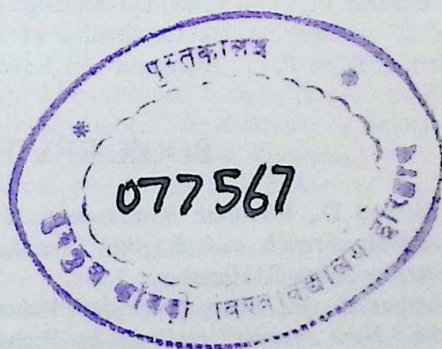
This study borrows the concept of "defamiliarization" from Victor Shklovsky's "Art as Technique" (1917) and argues that his Russian Formalism offers a valid approach to literature today. For Shklovsky, the work of literature was an autonomous language system set in opposition to the "practical" discourses that depend on habitual perception: "The technique of art is

to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the length and difficulty of perception because perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object itself is not important.*" Although his term presupposed the familiar and consequently presented artfulness as a modification of historically fluctuating cultural norms, Shklovsky reduced the various motives, messages, and effects of literature to "defamiliarization," a single universal drive for technical innovation and perceptual renewal. Stacy uncritically accepts this definition of art as technique and of perception as an end in itself, denying as a consequence the importance of content and context.

Shklovsky formulated his radically synchronic description of literature as a corrective to the literary criticism of his day that interpreted art in the light of simple notions of history and the history of ideas. He thus made technique the subject of serious critical attention. Failing to acquaint an American readership with this legitimate contribution by Russian Formalism in the development of European literary theory, Stacy presents defamiliarization as an undiscovered and total aesthetic. He suggests that in fact the poetics of such recent critics as Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva are restatements of Shklovsky. To the contrary, Fredric Jameson has shown in *The Prison-House of Language* that Formalist isolation of the work of literature prompted subsequent poetic theory to reconsider the work of art in its communication situation and thus establish new relationships between art and cultural history. Coming in the wake of such corrective responses as structuralism and semiotics, Stacy's formalism is simply anachronistic. In the copious sequence of examples that makes up the body of his book, furthermore, Stacy extends "defamiliarization" to include changes in practical as well as poetic language so broadly that the term, for lack of the precision it gained from Shklovsky's own applications, becomes too general to be meaningful.

NANCY ARMSTRONG

Wayne State University



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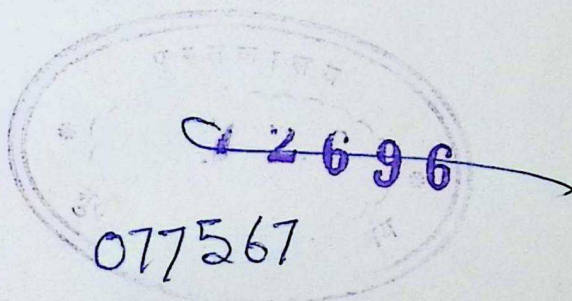
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